

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

November 4, 2014

His Excellency Jens Stoltenberg
Secretary General
North Atlantic Treaty Organization
Boulevard Leopold III, 1110
Brussels, Belgium

Dear Mr. Secretary General:

Congratulations on assuming one of the most important jobs in international security. We welcome your installation and look forward to your leadership during these challenging times for the NATO alliance.

On May 29, 2014, we wrote your predecessor on the particular challenge posed by France's contract to supply two advanced Mistral-class amphibious assault and helicopter carrier warships to the Russian Federation. In that letter, we proposed a solution to keep these warships out of the hands of a government that poses a clear and present threat to the security of certain NATO members, substantially enhance the Alliance's capabilities at a moment when some members have been cutting defense expenditures, and mitigate any disparate financial burden to France for refusing to transfer the warships to the Government of Russia.

Since we last wrote your office proposing that NATO purchase or lease these warships, Russian government actions have only heightened our concern over this potential transfer and strengthened our resolve to oppose it while exploring creative and constructive options to promote unity among our allies at a time when, to quote French President Francois Hollande, Russia's actions "contravene the fundamental principles of European security." Such a transfer should be unthinkable, at the moment, and for as long as Russia's government maintains its threatening posture toward NATO and occupies territories in neighboring European countries in gross violation of international law.

As we collectively confront the unacceptable actions of Russian President Vladimir Putin's government, every effort must be made to maintain transatlantic unity. Sensitive to the financial burden that France may incur should it rightly refuse to transfer these warships to Russia, we renew our call that NATO purchase or lease the warships as a common naval asset. Such a decisive move by NATO is not without precedent and would show President Putin that our rhetorical resolve is matched by our actual resolve and that this Alliance will not tolerate or abet his dangerous actions in Europe.

We, and many others, have repeatedly urged France to unequivocally refuse to transfer the Mistral-class warships and we appreciate France's willingness, in the wake of the downing of Malaysian Airlines Flight 17, to postpone a final decision on the fate of these warships until later this year. But we cannot be satisfied with any outcome that could see these ships sailing under the Russian flag—now or in the foreseeable future.

While there was a period following the end of the Cold War when Russia was acting cooperatively and could be considered a partner in European stability, that era has sadly, and definitively, come to an end following the attempted illegal annexation of Crimea. We all look forward to a future

His Excellency Jens Stoltenberg
November 4, 2014
Page Two

when we can work constructively with a representative and democratic government in Moscow to secure a Europe, whole, free, and at peace, that day has not come and, for now, it is critical that NATO members cease providing President Putin the means to intimidate or invade countries on Russia's periphery or even directly confront our allies.

Mr. Secretary General, we would have liked to keep this note a short one of congratulations as you assume an awesome responsibility, but circumstances require timely and decisive action on this urgent matter. We appreciate your consideration of our proposal that NATO purchase or lease these warships, and look forward to your response.

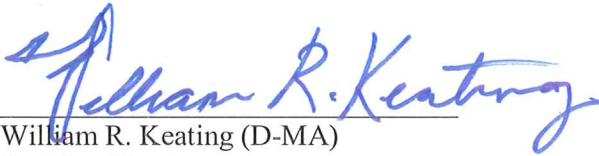
Sincerely,



Eliot L. Engel (D-NY)
Ranking Member
Committee on Foreign Affairs



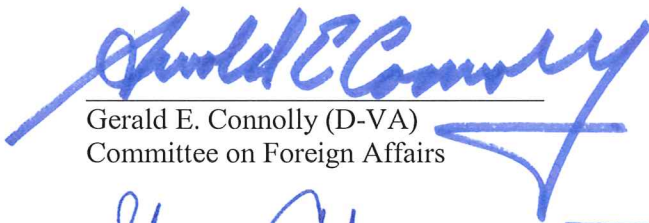
Michael Turner (R-OH)
Chairman
U.S. Delegation to NATO Parliamentary
Assembly



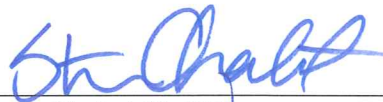
William R. Keating (D-MA)
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Europe, Eurasia,
and Emerging Threats
Committee on Foreign Affairs



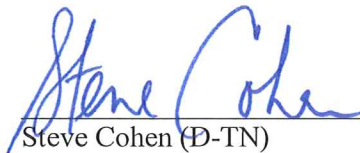
Mike Rogers (R-AL)
Chairman
Subcommittee on Strategic Forces
Armed Services Committee



Gerald E. Connolly (D-VA)
Committee on Foreign Affairs



Steve Chabot (R-OH)
Committee on Foreign Affairs



Steve Cohen (D-TN)
Commission on Security and
Cooperation in Europe



Jim Gerlach (R-PA)
Co-Chair
Congressional Ukrainian Caucus

cc Secretary of State John Kerry
cc Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel