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S. RES. 499

Celebrating 100 years of diplomatic relations between the United States
and the Baltic States.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JANUARY 31, 2022

Mr. DURBIN (for himself, Mr. GRASSLEY, Mrs. SHAHEEN, Mr. BOOZMAN, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, Mr. BRAUN, Ms. BALDWIN, Mr. BARRASSO, Mr. COONS, Mr. TILLIS, Mr. MURPHY, Mr. CRUZ, Mr. CARDIN, Mr. RUBIO, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Ms. COLLINS, Mr. MERKLEY, Mr. REED, and Ms. STABENOW) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations

RESOLUTION

Celebrating 100 years of diplomatic relations between the
United States and the Baltic States.

Whereas the Baltic States of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania originally declared their independence in 1918;

Whereas, in 1920, Soviet Russia signed treaties with Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania recognizing their sovereignty and renouncing all territorial claims over each Baltic State in perpetuity;

Whereas the United States established diplomatic relations with Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania as independent countries on July 28, 1922, and the United States and

the Baltic States have grown strong as partners for the past century;

Whereas, on August 23, 1939, the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany signed the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, which contained a secret protocol dividing Eastern Europe into spheres of influence, with the Baltic States ultimately being assigned to the Soviet Union, leading soon after to the forcible incorporation of the Baltic States into the Soviet Union;

Whereas, following World War II, the Soviet Union forcibly occupied the Baltic States, imposing its model of Soviet totalitarianism for more than 5 decades;

Whereas the United States never recognized the illegal occupation of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania by the Soviet Union, instead maintaining 100 years of continuous diplomatic relations with the Baltic States;

Whereas, in August 1989, approximately 2,000,000 people joined hands in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania to form a 373-mile human chain across the 3 states known as the Baltic Chain of Freedom;

Whereas, in February 1990, the people of Lithuania participated in the first free election to select a new parliament, which promptly voted to restore independence, making Lithuania the first occupied Soviet republic to declare independence on March 11, 1990, a move subsequently followed by Latvia on May 4, 1990, and Estonia on August 20, 1991;

Whereas, in January 1991, Soviet military forces tried to quash the growing independence restoration movement, leading to approximately 14 Lithuanian deaths, 6 Latvian deaths, and many injuries;

Whereas, in February and March 1991, the people of Lithuania, Estonia, and Latvia voted overwhelmingly in support of their respective independence restoration referendums, which the United States recognized later that year;

Whereas the Baltic States helped pave the path for democracy and freedom across Eastern Europe, leading to the fall of the Soviet Union;

Whereas, after the restoration of independence, the economies of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania emerged as modern market economies leading in technology and financial services sectors;

Whereas Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania continue to demonstrate their commitment to advancing democratic values, peace, and security through their membership and active participation in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the European Union, and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development;

Whereas the Baltic States have been loyal NATO allies, contributing to regional and global security through operations in Afghanistan and leadership in the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence in Estonia, the NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence in Latvia, and the NATO Energy Security Centre of Excellence in Lithuania;

Whereas the Baltic States contribute to the security of the Euro-Atlantic area by spending at least 2 percent of gross domestic product for defense and to global security through determined participation in international allied operations and missions;

Whereas Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania were among the first countries to participate in the National Guard State Partnership Program with the Maryland, Michigan, and Pennsylvania National Guards, respectively, and, since 1993, have provided additional opportunities to enhance National Guard skills and improve interoperability between the United States and Baltic forces;

Whereas, in 2019, the United States and the Baltic States signed the Security Cooperation Roadmaps, outlining joint security cooperation priorities for 2019 to 2024;

Whereas the Baltic States are actively involved in security assistance, promotion of democracy, and protection of human rights across Eastern Europe, including in Ukraine and Belarus, in the face of aggression and an increase of troops in Belarus by the Russian Federation and the manipulation of the migrant crisis in Europe by the Lukashenko regime;

Whereas the Government of the Russian Federation has pursued an aggressive disinformation campaign in the Baltic States, including intimidation of Western civilians and troops stationed in Europe and abroad via hacking, propaganda, and other cyberattacks, and has increased air provocations in Eastern Europe;

Whereas, since the restoration of independence, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania have faced considerable aggressive behavior, intimidation, and cyberattacks from the Russian Federation and, as a result, have worked to shape total defense strategies to counter intervention by the Russian Federation;

Whereas, after building trade ties with Taiwan, the Government of Lithuania has faced severe economic and diplomatic coercion from the People's Republic of China;

Whereas the Government of the People's Republic of China has brazenly imposed a customs blockade on products from Lithuania and imports containing Lithuanian parts, with the European Union considering taking the matter to the World Trade Organization as a violation of international trade rules;

Whereas, on December 21, 2021, in a call with Prime Minister of Lithuania Ingrida Simonyte, Secretary of State Tony Blinken underscored the ironclad solidarity of the relationship of the United States with Lithuania as Lithuania faces geopolitical challenges to regional stability, security, and economic prosperity;

Whereas, on January 5, 2022, at a joint press conference with Foreign Minister of Germany Annalena Baerbock, Secretary of State Blinken added, "We have immediate concern about the Government of China's attempts to bully Lithuania, a country of fewer than three million people. China is pushing European and American companies to stop building products with components made in Lithuania or risk losing access to the Chinese market, all because Lithuania chose to expand their cooperation with Taiwan.";

Whereas, on January 24, 2022, the Secretary of Defense put 8,500 members of the Armed Forces on high alert for potential deployment to Eastern Europe as part of a NATO response force;

Whereas support for the Baltic States by the United States remains a crucial factor for countering such economic

and diplomatic coercion by the Government of the People's Republic of China and ensuring security in the Baltic States and complements the efforts of NATO to strengthen its deterrence and defense posture, including an enhancing its forward presence in the eastern part of the NATO Alliance with multinational battlegroups;

Whereas the Baltic States have been models for democratic governance with strong institutions and respect for civil liberties and the rule of law, which are cherished shared values between the Baltic States and the United States; and

Whereas, since the restoration of independence, the democratic and economic development and progress of the Baltic States has established Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania as 3 shining beacons for freedom: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the Senate—

2 (1) celebrates 100 years of continuous diplo-
3 matic relations between the United States and Esto-
4 nia, Latvia, and Lithuania;

5 (2) looks forward to continued growth in diplo-
6 matic relations between the Baltic States and the
7 United States;

8 (3) commits to providing continued support for
9 the Baltic States through economic and security co-
10 operation, including through the Baltic Security Ini-
11 tiative, further strengthening transatlantic ties and
12 regional presence through the North Atlantic Treaty
13 Organization;

1 (4) recognizes the courage and resilience of the
2 people of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania in their
3 fight for freedom and democracy in the face of ag-
4 gressive behavior by the Russian Federation;

5 (5) stands in solidarity with Lithuania against
6 economic and diplomatic coercion by the People's
7 Republic of China; and

8 (6) expresses the wish that the next 100 years
9 of friendship between the Baltic States and the
10 United States continue to build on the positive
11 achievements and progress made since the Baltic
12 States restored their independence.

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