

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

April 18, 2016

The Honorable Mac Thornberry  
Chairman  
The House Armed Services Committee  
2216 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Adam Smith  
Ranking Member  
The House Armed Services Committee  
2216 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Thornberry and Ranking Member Smith:

As you work to develop and bring to the floor the FY 2017 National Defense Authorization Act, on behalf of the Congressional Poland Caucus we write to urge your support at the President's 2017 budget request of \$3.4 billion for ongoing European Reassurance Initiative (ERI) operations. Since operations began in March 2014, the ERI has demonstrated that the United States is committed to the security of our NATO allies and Europe in the face of Russia's aggressive and destabilizing foreign policy. As Russia continues to illegally intervene in Ukraine, violate NATO member airspace, and build up its military posture in Kaliningrad, the ERI remains necessary to counter Russian aggression. The ERI and the proposed funding level of \$3.4 billion have been welcomed by NATO members, especially Central and Eastern European allies who are the most vulnerable to Russian hostilities.

Ahead of the 2016 Warsaw summit, NATO continues to develop the NATO Response Force (NRF) under the Readiness Action Plan, which was agreed upon during the 2014 Wales summit. Currently, NATO military staff are in the process of phasing in the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force into NRF operations. The U.S. is contributing to this plan through Operation Atlantic Resolve (OAR) to provide persistent force deployments. In support of OAR, the ERI fulfills our commitment to enhancing NATO's readiness by conducting military exercises and training on land, in the air, and at sea, while sustaining an increased rotational equipment and troop presence across Europe. In the December 2015 Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2016, Congress appropriated \$789 million in Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) funds for the ERI for 2016.

Military assurance measures began in May 2014, and during the past two years NATO members conducted over 1,000 exercises in Europe. Already in 2016 ERI exercises include operations Juniper Cobra which simulated rocket and missile attacks, Cold Response an arctic weather joint exercise in Norway, and Saber Guardian which simulates an international peacekeeping mission in Ukraine. These actions demonstrate to Russia and other regional threats that America and NATO will keep its global security commitments. However, the largest increases in funding for FY 2017 are directed towards the persistent force deployments for which the President is requesting \$1.05 billion, and prepositioned equipment for which the President has requested \$1.9 billion. This includes funding to deploy 4,000-5,000 additional troops to Europe along with operational and support equipment for those soldiers, and will enable the Army to station an additional armored brigade in Europe bringing the total to three

brigades. Additionally, the repositioning of equipment is essential for U.S. and NATO forces to quickly reinforce those already engaged in a theater of war.

This overall increase in funding will empower U.S. commanders to properly station and prepare U.S. and allied forces for any threat. Moving forward, commanders will be able to expand training exercises and other operations that will increase the capabilities of our allies, improve NATO's ability to fight as a joint force as well as improve interoperability and mutual understanding within the alliance. Most importantly, this funding level sends a clear signal to Russia that the U.S. is investing in Europe's security and capabilities long into the future. The ongoing operations reaffirm our NATO commitment to all Members, and provide the necessary preparation for future Russian aggression and other security risks to the region. Maintaining this proactive initiative to regional events begins by approving the President's funding request so ERI operations can continue building NATO's strategic capabilities in Central and Eastern Europe. We appreciate your consideration and thank you for your leadership.

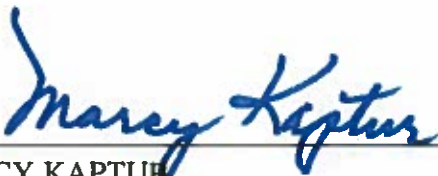
Sincerely,



DANIEL LIPINSKI  
Member of Congress



TIM MURPHY  
Member of Congress



MARCY KAPTUR  
Member of Congress



CHRIS SMITH  
Member of Congress



ADAM SCHIFF  
Member of Congress



TOM COLE  
Member of Congress



BRIAN HIGGINS  
Member of Congress



DEBBIE DINGELL  
Member of Congress