

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 23, 2023

President Joseph Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

As you prepare for the NATO summit this year in Vilnius, we write to underscore the critical need for NATO members to increase and fully meet defense spending commitments to the alliance.

The Senate put our allies on notice in this regard last August. In the process of approving Finland's and Sweden's accessions to NATO, the Senate amended the resolution of ratification to state that all members of NATO should spend a minimum of 2% of GDP on defense.¹

This amendment was unanimously adopted by the U.S. Senate.

Failure of many of our allies – including some of NATO's largest members – to meet commitments of 2% of GDP on defense has the potential to undermine American support for the alliance, severely limits Europe's ability to contribute to our shared interest in defending against Russia, and is a source of long-term instability in Europe, not to mention frustration for American taxpayers.²

We are not asking our NATO allies to do anything they have not already pledged to do. In 2014 at the NATO Summit in Wales attended by the Obama-Biden Administration, all NATO member countries committed to maintain or move toward meeting the 2% defense guideline within 10 years. Through 2022, according to NATO, only seven have, including the United States.³ None of the others are major economies, except the United Kingdom. This means that despite increased spending by some, the US, which accounts for a little more than half of the combined alliance GDP, ultimately pays 70% of NATO's combined defense expenditures.⁴

Although we appreciate the assistance that many of our European allies have provided Ukraine, the heavy European emphasis on economic and refugee assistance is directly attributable to the inability of many to meet their NATO commitments in a way the alliance demands. This has

¹ United States Senate. (2022, August 3). *S.Amdt. 5192 to Treaty Document 117-3*.

congress.gov. <https://www.congress.gov/amendment/117th-congress/senate-amendment/5192/actions>

² *The Secretary General's Annual Report*. (2022).

NATO. https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2023/3/pdf/sgar22-en.pdf

³ *The Secretary General's Annual Report*. (2022).

NATO. https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2023/3/pdf/sgar22-en.pdf

⁴ *The Secretary General's Annual Report*. (2022).

NATO. https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2023/3/pdf/sgar22-en.pdf

immediate implications in Ukraine where our allies could be a force multiplier in helping bring this conflict to a successful end.

The Wales Summit was not the first time Europe's underinvestment became a problem in need of addressing within the alliance. The establishment of the 2% target actually goes back to 2006, when like today, only seven NATO members met the threshold.

The lack of sufficient progress is politically and economically unsustainable. American citizens rightly question why our government disproportionately bears the burden – decade after decade – for Europe's defense. In Vilnius, we respectfully request that you make this issue a top priority.

We are encouraged by reports that leaders at the Summit may set the 2% target as the floor for NATO member defense spending⁵, while asking for up to 1% more as an objective. Our hope would be that in adopting this more ambitious goal, all NATO members will prioritize defense spending and manage to meet their obligations to the alliance.

That disparities in NATO member defense spending have persisted for so long is incompatible with genuine partnership.

Thank you for your consideration. In Vilnius, we hope you will lead our alliance to a more concrete level of commitment to defense of our common interests.

Sincerely,



Dan Sullivan
United States Senator



Todd Young
United States Senator



Pete Ricketts
United States Senator



Ted Budd
United States Senator



Kevin Cramer
United States Senator



Roger Marshall
United States Senator

⁵ Gould, J., & Sprenger, S. (2023, February 15). *NATO summit defense spending pledges may exceed 2% target, Austin says*. *Defense News*. <https://www.defensenews.com/pentagon/2023/02/15/nato-summit-defense-spending-pledges-may-exceed-2-target-austin-says/>



Mike Braun
United States Senator



Marsha Blackburn
United States Senator



Rick Scott
United States Senator



Lindsey Graham
United States Senator



J.D. Vance
United States Senator



M. Michael Rounds
United States Senator



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John Thune
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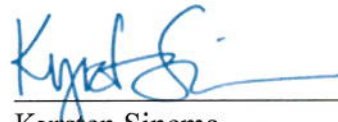
Cynthia Lummis
United States Senator



Markwayne Mullin
United States Senator



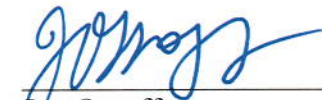
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United States Senator



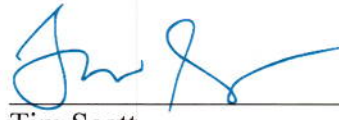
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John Hoeven
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John Kennedy
United States Senator



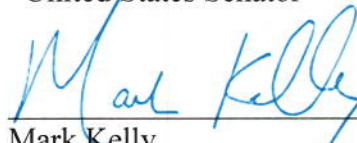
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United States Senator



Tom Cotton
United States Senator



Joni Ernst
United States Senator



Mark Kelly
United States Senator