

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 2, 2018

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We strongly disagree with your past statements praising Russian President Vladimir Putin, in spite of overwhelming evidence from our intelligence community that the Russian government interfered in the 2016 U.S. election, its illegal occupation of Crimea, its support for a war criminal in Syria, as well as its other destabilizing actions against the United States and our allies. If you continue with your plan to meet with President Putin, you must hold him accountable for these actions. During your trip to Europe, we urge you to remember at the North Atlantic Treaty Organization Summit in Brussels that NATO's collective security principles have served to keep our nation secure and prosperous since the end of the Second World War.

Clear U.S. leadership is necessary to counter President Putin's efforts to undermine the NATO alliance and its founding values. In the last few years, the Kremlin has conducted a widespread campaign of interference in democratic processes around the globe, including in our own U.S. elections. From its violent aggression in eastern Ukraine, to its illegal occupation of the Ukrainian territory of Crimea, to its support for the brutal regime of Bashar Al-Assad in Syria – there is no evidence that the Government of the Russian Federation has changed or plans to change its behavior. If anything, the Kremlin appears to feel emboldened that it can launch attacks against the U.S. and our NATO allies – in the form of cyber attacks, disinformation, misinformation, and political interference, including the use of chemical agents on UK soil – with impunity.

While there is a place for dialogue between nations on disagreements and common challenges, such as reducing nuclear dangers, we are deeply concerned that your Administration continues to send mixed messages regarding the Russian security threat.

During your meeting with President Putin, we ask that you convey that there will be clear consequences for Russia's interference in democratic processes in the United States and elsewhere, its support for violence and bloodshed in Ukraine and Syria, and the illegal occupation of Crimea. We strongly urge you to stand steadfast on the U.S. commitment to the mutual defense of our Allies and to the people of Ukraine. Congress will especially oppose any step to degrade our strong bilateral relationship with Ukraine, including decreasing security

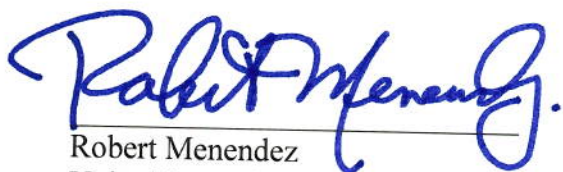
assistance. In keeping with the United States' longstanding support for human rights we urge you to also raise the plight of prisoners in Russia and areas under Russian control who have been detained simply for peacefully expressing their political views and/or religious beliefs.

We agree with Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's statement on April 27, 2018 that NATO has been "an essential pillar of American security interests for decades" and that, "In light of Russia's unacceptable actions, NATO is more indispensable than ever." In addition to urging NATO allies to meet their commitments to spend 2% of GDP on defense, working to boost NATO rapid mobility and readiness capacities, and addressing cyber threats and other evolving forms of hybrid warfare, it is imperative that you make a strong statement of support for the democratic nations that make up the Alliance and make clear that the United States stands with—not in opposition to—our oldest and closest allies.

The United States' NATO allies rushed to collectively defend the security and freedom of the United States when—for the first and only time—Article 5 of the NATO treaty was invoked following the September 11, 2001 terror attacks. Brave citizens of our NATO allies have since put their lives on the line alongside U.S. military and civilians, in Afghanistan and elsewhere, to combat terrorism and to tackle a range of security threats, sometimes paying the ultimate sacrifice in the process. This is a legacy that merits renewed efforts by the United States to reinforce the alliance, rather than diminish it.

Secretary Pompeo also said in April that "NATO should not return to business as usual with Russia until Moscow shows a clear change in its actions and complies with international law." As you know, Congress is virtually unanimous on its concerns over Russia, as demonstrated by the passage of last year's Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act which you signed into law in August 2017. We stand ready to engage with your Administration, and with our NATO partners, to further the implementation of this law and a coherent, coordinated U.S. policy toward Russia that reflects the realities of Russia's aggression and our nation's deepest democratic values.

Sincerely,



Robert Menendez
United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Mark R. Warner
United States Senator



Jack Reed
United States Senator