

TESTIMONY OF JEFFREY D. LEVINE
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SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE
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Madam Chairman, Members of the Committee, it is an honor to appear before you today as President Obama's nominee to be the next U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Estonia. I am grateful to the President and to Secretary Clinton for the trust they have placed in me. If confirmed, I will work tirelessly to advance the interests of the United States and further strengthen the already deep and productive relationship we enjoy with Estonia.

Madam Chairman, with me today are my wife Janie and son Nick. I am indeed fortunate to have a supportive family who has shared the joys and challenges of my 27-year Foreign Service career. Nick will be remaining in the U.S. to start college but – if I am confirmed – I hope he will share at least part of this adventure on school breaks.

For nearly fifty years, the United States refused to acknowledge the illegal and forcible occupation of Estonia by the Soviet Union. The regular statements of support that came from the White House and the Congress served as signals of hope for Estonians both in Estonia and abroad. Since 1991 and the reestablishment of Estonia's independence, each American President and every Congress have continued this support as Estonia transformed itself from a Soviet satellite to the strong, reliable, and democratic ally, that it is today.

Estonia is a modern free-market success story. Even during the worldwide economic crisis, Estonia's fiscal and economic situation has steadily improved. After more than a year as a member of the Euro zone, Estonia's economic situation is stronger than ever; in the midst of Europe's economic problems, Moody's upgraded Estonia's credit rating last year. Estonia is

also sharing the benefits and lessons of its success with other democracies and nations in transition across the globe.

Since it became a NATO Ally in 2004, Estonia has shown unwavering support for our shared objectives around the world. Estonian troops served with us in Iraq and continue to operate without caveats in southern Afghanistan. Estonia has expressed its commitment to stay on the ground as the NATO mission transforms into advice and assistance. This commitment remains strong, though Estonia has paid a high price for this service with the lives of eleven of its brave soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan, the second highest per capita loss in Afghanistan of any ISAF partner. Estonia has also contributed to many other military missions, including in Kosovo, Bosnia/Herzegovina and the Horn of Africa.

Estonia's military remains a force in transition, but one that is willing to take on dangerous missions, side by side with American troops. Our support remains a crucial tool to help Estonia create a military even more capable of serving alongside U.S. forces in the future. Estonian soldiers and officers attend training in the U.S. and have proven themselves accomplished and knowledgeable partners on the ground in Afghanistan and around the world. Estonia has also committed two percent of its GDP to defense spending, serving as a model for other Allies in sharing the burden for our common security.

Estonia is a world leader in information technology, and an Estonian entrepreneur is the creator of the Skype technology now used around the world. It hosts the NATO Cyber-Security Center of Excellence in Tallinn, which the United States joined officially in 2011. Estonia's innovative Cyber Defense League works closely with the Maryland National Guard to boost cyber security in both our countries. In joint operations with the FBI and Secret Service, Estonia has been crucial in bringing a number of cyber criminals to justice in the United States.

Estonia is also a pioneer in e-governance. In its last election one quarter of Estonians voted online, electronic medical records are fully accessible from any doctor's office, and its citizens have unprecedented access to information about their government. Moreover, Estonia has willingly shared this expertise with more than forty nations, from Tunisia, to India, to Ukraine. If confirmed, I will work to continue our strong cooperation on cyber issues, and find ways to leverage U.S. support for Estonia's endeavors to ensure that our assistance to young democracies like Moldova, for example, is as effective as possible.

The United States also welcomes Estonia's ongoing efforts to build strong communal relations among all Estonians, including the country's sizeable Russian-speaking population. If confirmed, I hope to work closely with my public diplomacy colleagues in Washington and in the region to further utilize "social media" resources to better reach out to all in Estonia, including the Russian-speaking minority and especially to young people.

Madam Chairman, Members of the Committee, the history of relations between the American people and Estonians is one of trust and mutual support. Just as we stood side by side with the Estonian people during their difficult past, Estonians today are at our side as we meet common challenges and seize joint opportunities. Estonians are not just dependable Allies and strong partners, but also close friends of the American people. If confirmed, I will dedicate myself to advancing that friendship and promoting U.S. interests in Estonia to further our partnership.

Thank you again for allowing me to appear before you today. I look forward to your questions.