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The Rt Hon David Cameron MP
Prime Minister of the United Kingdom
10 Downing Street
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August 2014

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE PRIME MINISTER ON THE NATO SUMMIT

Dear Prime Minister,

At the time of the last NATO summit in Chicago, the world looked very different; there was hope that risks to world peace were containable and that actions put in hand would assist in this regard. In 2014, NATO and the West face an increasing number of threats whose seriousness is as great as has been seen since the end of the Cold War. The Middle East is in turmoil. Our withdrawal from Afghanistan is likely to open up yet further instability in the region. In the Far East, a resurgent China is flexing her muscles in the China Seas, consolidating her hold on vital raw materials in Africa and perhaps moving closer to Russia. Nearer home, Russia seems resolved to secure her interests through military means and by doing so threatens the security of NATO's newer members. We cannot remain immune from such events and it is through NATO that we should react.

To you falls the considerable responsibility of chairing this most important NATO summit since the end of the Cold War. It is clear that, as the Secretary General of NATO has just said¹, the present crisis is a “*wake-up call for the Alliance*”. Russia has torn up the rule book and with it “*the hope ... that a post-Soviet Russia could be peacefully integrated into a western world*”.²

As Chairman you have recognised and strongly responded to these developments in a letter calling for all NATO powers to:

- stand up firmly to Russia
- recommit to defending any threatened members
- agree urgent deterrent actions
- agree higher defence spending by NATO EUROPE

We strongly endorse all these actions and submit some suggestions as to how these proposals might best be implemented.

The first step, as you have stated, is that at the summit all 28 NATO members should reaffirm their support for Article V of the NATO Treaty – that an attack on one is an attack on all and that all members will come to the aid of any member attacked or threatened. Legally this is unnecessary, but psychologically it is important.

The second and urgent step, as you have called for, is to recommence regular major military exercises in Eastern Europe to match those by Russia, and to construct military bases and to pre-position equipment to permit rapid reinforcement in any emergency. But NATO members have not engaged in such exercises since the end of the Cold War. There are no budgets for significant military exercises, nor funds for pre-positioning equipment. President Obama has just allocated \$1bn for American troops. This must be matched by NATO Europe. The initial build-up will inevitably

¹ *Financial Times*, 6th August 2014 – ‘*Each NATO ally must pull its weight after Russia's threats*’.

² *Financial Times*, 2nd August 2014 – ‘*War in History's Shadow*’, Niall Ferguson.

be slow; but even a small immediate build-up will signal NATO's new determination. Putin perceives himself strong because he believes the West is weak and lacking in leadership. These necessary actions will help to change his mind.

The third step you have urged is to increase the defence budgets of NATO Europe members to at least the NATO recommended minimum of 2% of GDP, which even Britain and France barely meet. In the last five years NATO allies have on average cut defence provision by 20%, but Russia has increased its defence budget by 50%, and has earmarked \$700bn for the next six years! The 2% of GDP target is only a *minimum* target, not the result of careful strategic analysis. Getting all European NATO members up to the 2% minimum target is a first step, but NATO headquarters and member nations must agree and implement an updated strategy which takes full account of today's changed reality. To provide coherence with NATO, there is a strong case for us bringing forward next year's planned Strategic Defence and Security Review.

If we are advocating increased spending elsewhere in Europe, Britain will not be credible if we are not prepared to spend more ourselves. Britain can move faster than other European nations. We can immediately stop the planned defence cuts, most notably in Army numbers. Also, we can cancel the halving of our Rapid Reaction Forces, revitalise the Foreign Office's counter terrorism unit, and fully restore our Russian analysis capabilities across the Ministry of Defence. As many independent analysts have repeatedly stated, our Armed Forces are presently too small, too unbalanced, with many serious gaps across the Services. Moreover, in defence spending it is output which matters and we, with only 7 combat capable Air Squadrons against the 15 of France, and our 19 surface ship combatants to France's 25, are not in a strong position in this regard.

The task for Britain at the summit is thus to lead by example by increasing our defence budget which should provide the spur to motivate the rest of NATO Europe. As Britain's economic recovery is now proceeding strongly we are better placed than others to take this lead. Britain's defence budget should now be ring-fenced. Not to do so would be to imply that defence is not the first duty of Government, but a lower priority than presently ring-fenced public services. With such a commitment Britain would be taken seriously by Russia and by the rest of NATO.

The fourth step is to ensure a united front on economic sanctions against Russia. All NATO countries have to make sacrifices for the common good. Germany, the major European country most dependent on Russian gas, now seems determined to make the necessary sacrifices. Others must be persuaded to follow this example.

There is one important exception to the united front on sanctions. France is unwilling to cancel the sale of its two amphibious assault craft to Russia. This should be unacceptable to the rest of NATO. Assault ships are unambiguously offensive in nature and would be invaluable should Russia ever contemplate a seaborne invasion of the Baltic States or Southern Ukraine. Russia would surely judge NATO as weak if these two ships were delivered. If France will not accept the economic loss alone then the rest of NATO Europe should share the cost and employ the ships accordingly.

To sum up, it is clear that you have the great responsibility, as Chairman of the Summit, to provide the firm leadership which NATO now requires. If you can implement the four steps recommended in this letter there is every chance that you will also secure an invaluable prize – ***the return of a fully active America to NATO***. America has partially withdrawn its support for NATO in Europe, being no longer willing to shoulder 75% of the combined defence budget of the 28 members when the combined GDP of NATO's 26 European members exceeds that of America. The full commitment of NATO Europe to the four steps and the consequential recommitment of America to NATO will, in Anders Rasmussen's words, "*maintain the strongest military alliance the world has ever known*".

It is a fortunate conjunction of events which results in a British Prime Minister chairing this most crucial NATO summit; it is in fact a unique opportunity. Britain, with its globally respected Armed Forces and its credible NATO contribution over seventy years, second only to that of the United States, can stop the drift into danger which we now face. We attach a draft Declaration for this Summit in Wales and we wish you success for the sake of all NATO members and for the contribution you can make to world peace.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Andrew Roberts
Air Chief Marshal Sir Michael Graydon
General Sir Michael Rose
Vice Admiral Sir Jeremy Blackham
Air Commodore Andrew Lambert
Antony Hichens
Allen Sykes

cc. Anders Rasmussen, Secretary General, NATO