

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 16, 2025

Secretary General Mark Rutte
North Atlantic Treaty Organization
Boulevard Léopold III
B-1110 Brussels, Belgium

Secretary General Rutte:

Congratulations on your selection as NATO Secretary General, a position you assume at a critical time for the historic alliance. NATO has been at the forefront of transatlantic security since its inception. It has not only helped keep the peace in Europe, but its support has been critical in assisting Ukraine repel Russia's outrageous military assault. We write to urge equal attention to the new vulnerability facing NATO members, particularly in and around the Baltic states.

It is clear that Russia, including through proxies and shadow shipping fleets, is increasing sabotage, violence, cyber-attacks, political interference, and misinformation against NATO members states. Most recently a Russian shadow fleet tanker severed a critical undersea power cable linking Estonia and Finland. Finland appropriately seized the vessel.

Other likely Russian-supported acts in NATO member states include arson, plots to plant incendiary devices on cargo planes, a plot to kill the head of a German weapons manufacturer (making weapons for Ukraine), and election interference in many friendly capitals. You and your Deputy, James Appathurai, have spoken forcefully about this growing threat. In fact, Appathurai recently warned of the likelihood of one of these attacks "causing substantial numbers of casualties or very substantial economic damage." And former Lithuanian Foreign Minister Gabrielius Landsbergis similarly warned, "My country is one of those who are being under threat by those so-called hybrid threats. In some cases, I challenged the notion itself that it's called 'hybrid threat,' because it's more than that." The extraordinary nature of these new forms of provocations challenges us to make certain the NATO alliance is prepared and clearheaded about the threats.

Quite simply, Russia and any other malign actors must know that such actions – be it the incidents highlighted in this letter or any others against our allies and partners – will not be tolerated and will draw increasingly firm and decisive responses, whether overtly or covertly. We will work to support such efforts in the United States Senate and continue to strongly support NATO and allied support to Ukraine and to deter any other threats to the Alliance.

Sincerely,



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



Thom Tillis
United States Senator



Charles E. Grassley
United States Senator



Pete Ricketts
United States Senator

cc: Mr. Alar Karis, President of Estonia
Mr. Alexander Stubb, President of Finland
Mr. Edgars Rinkēvičs, President of Latvia
Mr. Gitanas Nausėda, President of Lithuania
Mr. Andrzej Duda, President of Poland