

September 15, 1995

**Cable, Secretary of State to US Embassy Tallinn,
'Acting Secretary Talbott Sept. 1 Meeting with
Estonian P.M. Vahi: Focus on Russia and Security
Concerns'**

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Summary:

This document summarizes a September 1, 1995, meeting between Acting US Secretary of State Strobe Talbott and Estonian Prime Minister Tiit Vähi. They discussed Estonia's desire for normalized relations with Russia, concerns over border negotiations and military pensioners, and threats from Russian officials regarding NATO cooperation. Talbott reaffirmed U.S. support for Estonia's sovereignty, border resolution efforts, and potential future NATO membership, while also addressing U.S. concerns about press freedom and a defense procurement matter.

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SUBJECT: ACTING SECRETARY TALBOTT'S SEPT. 1 MEETING WITH ESTONIAN P.M. VAHI: FOCUS ON RUSSIA AND SECURITY CONCERNS

REFS: A) BONN 17872 (NOTAL)

- - B) FBIS LD0309160995 (KRYLOV AGAINST BALTICS IN NATO)

1. (C) SUMMARY: ESTONIA WANTS NORMAL RELATIONS WITH RUSSIA, SEEKS U.S. INTERVENTION WITH MOSCOW ON THE BORDER ISSUE, AND IS CONCERNED BY MENACING RUSSIAN STATEMENTS AGAINST ESTONIAN COOPERATION WITH NATO. ACTING SECRETARY TALBOTT PROMISED ALL POSSIBLE U.S. SUPPORT ON THE BORDER ISSUE, REJECTED STATEMENTS THAT THE BALTICS ARE NOT ELIGIBLE FOR NATO, AND NOTED THAT WE CONTINUE TO CAUTION THE RUSSIANS AGAINST MAKING COUNTERPRODUCTIVE STATEMENTS. END SUMMARY.

2. (U) CAPPING A ROUND OF MEETINGS AT DOD (U/S/ SLOCOMBE), NSC (DEPUTY ADVISOR BERGER), FBI (DIRECTOR FREEH), AND IMF/IBRD, PRIME MINISTER VAHI CALLED ON ACTING SECRETARY TALBOTT SEPT. 1. TALBOTT THANKED VAHI FOR THE GOE'S CONDOLENCES OVER THE TRAGIC LOSS OF DAS AND FORMER AMBASSADOR TO ESTONIA ROBERT FRASURE AND PROMISED THAT THE USG WOULD TACKLE WITH RENEWED DEDICATION THE MANY

INITIATIVES FRASURE HAD WORKED ON, INCLUDING ENSURING THE SECURITY OF ESTONIA. VAHI ANSWERED THAT U.S. SUPPORT IS KEY FOR ESTONIA'S SECURITY, WHICH DEPENDS ON RAPID RE-INTEGRATION INTO THE WEST THROUGH INTENSIVE COOPERATION WITH THE EU AND NATO. HE STRESSED THAT ESTONIA'S WESTWARD APPROACH IS NOT ANTI-RUSSIAN. INDEED, ESTONIA WANTS TO NORMALIZE RELATIONS WITH RUSSIA BY RATIFYING THE JULY 1994 TROOP WITHDRAWAL AND RUSSIAN MILITARY PENSIONERS AGREEMENTS AND RESOLVING THE BORDER ISSUE. ESTONIA HAS TOLD RUSSIA IT WANTS TO RESOLVE THE BORDER ISSUE ON THE BASIS OF THE 1920 TARTU TREATY SINCE THE TREATY IS THE FOUNDATION OF ESTONIAN SOVEREIGNTY, BUT IS READY TO ACCEPT THE CURRENT, STALIN-ERA BORDERS WITH MINOR CHANGES TO FACILITATE BORDER CONTROLS. VAHI ASKED FOR U.S. SUPPORT IN PRODDING MOSCOW TO MOVE AHEAD ON A SATISFACTORY RESOLUTION OF THE ISSUE.

3. (C) TALBOTT ASSURED VAHI THAT ESTONIA WILL HAVE U.S. SUPPORT ON THE BORDER ISSUE IN EVERY WAY WE CAN THINK OF, SINCE IT IS DANGEROUS TO LET THE PROBLEM LINGER. HE ADVISED VAHI, HOWEVER, THAT ESTONIA SHOULD KEEP IN MIND TWO THINGS. FIRST, THE ESTONIANS MUST RECOGNIZE THAT THE APPROACH TO RESOLVING THE BORDER ISSUE HAS DOMESTIC POLITICAL RAMIFICATIONS IN RUSSIA AS WELL. THE SITUATION

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THERE WILL REMAIN COMPLEX FOR DECADES, EVEN GENERATIONS, BUT THE LEADUP TO THE DECEMBER PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS REQUIRES PARTICULAR STATESMANSHIP ON ALL OUR PARTS. SECOND, IT IS OUR GOOD RELATIONS WITH RUSSIA WHICH MAKE POSSIBLE USE OF U.S. GOOD OFFICES TO URGE A PROMPT, UNAMBIGUOUS, AND EQUITABLE SETTLEMENT. TALBOTT PROMISED TO DELIVER THE MESSAGE PERSONALLY WITHIN THE NEXT TWO WEEKS AS WELL AS THROUGH AMBASSADOR PICKERING. VAHI SAID U.S. PRODDING WOULD BE OF SUBSTANTIAL HELP.

4. (U) CONTINUING ON SECURITY ISSUES, TALBOTT NOTED U.S. CONCERNS THAT THE EVOLUTION OF NATO NOT BE PERCEIVED AS A NEW FORM OF CONTAINMENT AGAINST RUSSIA. ESTONIA COULD HELP US AVOID PROMULGATING THIS FALSE PERCEPTION BY DEVELOPING INSTITUTIONS OTHER THAN NATO SO THAT NATO EVOLUTION IS SEEN AS PART OF A LARGER CONTEXT. THUS WE APPLAUD ESTONIA'S PARTICIPATION IN SUCH ACTIVITIES AS THE BALTIC BATTALION, PFP, AND EXERCISES (COOPERATIVE NUGGET).

5. (U) AT THE SAME TIME, TALBOTT CONTINUED, IT IS IMPORTANT TO REITERATE THAT THE USG IS VERY CAREFUL IN ITS ARTICULATION OF NATO EXPANSION POLICY. IT IS EMPHATICALLY NOT USG POLICY TO ASSERT THAT THE BALTIC STATES CAN NEVER BELONG TO NATO. IT WOULD BE WRONG AS A MATTER OF EQUITY

OR POLICY FOR US TO GIVE ANY CREDENCE TO THE IDEA THAT, BECAUSE OF HISTORY OR GEOGRAPHY, ESTONIA IS PRECLUDED FROM NATO MEMBERSHIP. WE MAKE THIS POINT TO THE RUSSIANS AS WELL. WE DO NOT HAVE CONCLUSIVE ANSWERS TO THE ISSUE OF ESTONIA'S ROLE OR OPPORTUNITY AS EXPANSION GOES FORWARD. HOWEVER, TALBOTT STRESSED, WE WILL NEVER SAY "NEVER", AND WE DO NOT TREAT THE BALTICS AS LYING IN A PERMANENT EXCLUSION ZONE.

6. ~~(S)~~ NOTING ESTONIAN CONCERN OVER RECENT AGGRESSIVE RUSSIAN LANGUAGE, VAHI QUOTED DEPUTY FONMIN KRYLOV'S THREAT TO HIM WHEN VISITING TALLINN IN MID-JULY: "RUSSIA STRONGLY OPPOSES ESTONIA'S INTENSIFIED COOPERATION WITH NATO; IN ANY EVENT NATO IS INCAPABLE OF PROTECTING YOU BECAUSE IT IS TOO DEMOCRATIC AN ORGANIZATION, AND WHILE THE PARLIAMENT IN LUXEMBOURG DEBATES HOW TO RESPOND, RUSSIA WILL ALREADY HAVE RESOLVED THE ISSUE." VAHI SAID THIS DISTURBING MESSAGE ILLUSTRATES RUSSIA'S POLICY TOWARD ESTONIA--THAT ESTONIA SHOULD NOT LEAVE THE RUSSIAN SPHERE OF INFLUENCE. (NOTE: KRYLOV STEPPED UP THE PRESSURE ON SEPTEMBER 1--SEE REF B. END NOTE) TALBOTT REPLIED THAT THE U.S. HAS MADE CLEAR TO THE RUSSIANS THAT WE ACCEPT NEITHER THE PHRASE NOR THE CONCEPT OF "SPHERE OF INFLUENCE". WE HAVE REPLIED TO SUCH STATEMENTS AS KRYLOV'S BY TELLING THE VERY HIGHEST LEVELS IN MOSCOW THAT THREATS ARE COUNTERPRODUCTIVE TO RUSSIA'S OWN INTERESTS BY STRENGTHENING THE RATIONALE FOR NATO EXPANSION IN THE VERY

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WAY RUSSIA DOES NOT WANT. IT WILL THUS BE IMPORTANT FOR THE U.S. AND ESTONIA TO STAY IN CLOSE TOUCH SO THAT THE GOE UNDERSTANDS WHAT WE ARE SAYING TO THE RUSSIANS. HE ADVISED VAHI TO WORK WITH AMBASSADOR TAYLOR ON THIS AND OTHER ISSUES.

7. (U) TALBOTT CONCLUDED BY RAISING TWO OTHER POINTS. FIRST, HE URGED THE GOE TO GIVE STRONG CONSIDERATION TO A BID BY RAYTHEON TO SUPPLY A RADAR SURVEILLANCE SYSTEM. SECOND, HE EXPRESSED STRONG U.S. CONCERN ABOUT REPORTS THAT THE GOE IS CONSIDERING LICENSING MEDIA WITH FOREIGN CAPITAL. IN THE U.S. VIEW THIS WOULD INHIBIT FREEDOM OF THE PRESS AND COULD DAMAGE ESTONIA'S OTHERWISE BRIGHT IMAGE. VAHI NOTED THAT NEGOTIATIONS CONTINUE WITH RAYTHEON (NOTE: COMPETING AGAINST THOMSON OF FRANCE. END NOTE) BUT MENTIONED FINANCING AS A CRITICAL FACTOR. -REGARDING LICENSING, HE CLAIMED THE PROPOSAL ORIGINATED WITH ESTONIAN JOURNALISTS BUT HAS NOT MADE IT ONTO THE CABINET'S AGENDA (THE ESTONIAN AMBASSADOR TOLD US AFTER THE MEETING THAT, SEEING THE VIGOR WITH WHICH TALBOTT RAISED-THE POINT, VAHI CONFIDED HE WOULD HAVE TO TORPEDO THE PROPOSAL).

8. (U) ATTENDING ON THE ESTONIAN SIDE WERE AMBASSADOR ILVES AND ECONOMIC OFFICER TRINK; ON THE U.S. SIDE WERE D STAFFER WITHERS, EUR/NB OFFICE DIRECTOR VAN VOORST, AND BALTICS DESK OFFICER KUNSTADTER (NOTETAKER). CHRISTOPHER

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