

**September 9, 1996**

**Cable, Secretary of State to US Embassy Tallinn,  
'Acting Secretary Briefs Baltics on Action Plan'**

**Citation:**

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**Summary:**

On August 29, 1996, Acting Secretary of State Strobe Talbott briefed representatives from Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania on the US Baltic Action Plan—a three-track strategy aimed at supporting the Baltics' integration into Western institutions.

**Original Language:**

English

**Contents:**

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RELEASE IN FULL

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SUBJECT: ACTING SECRETARY BRIEFS BALTICS ON ACTION PLAN

1. (U) CLASSIFIED BY CAROL VAN VOORST, DIRECTOR EUR/NB.  
REASONS: 1.5 (B) AND (D).

2. SUMMARY. In a meeting August 29 with representatives of the three Baltic embassies, Acting Secretary Talbott provided an overview of the interagency-cleared Baltic Action Plan outlining a three-track approach to U.S. relations with Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia. Noting that the plan would be briefed in more detail by a USG team prepared to visit the region in September, the Acting Secretary described it as a strategy designed to promote the integration of the Baltics into the West by fostering the development of institutional links, regional cooperation, peaceful relations with neighbors, and a deepening bilateral relationship with the U.S. Ambassador Ojars Kalnins (Latvia), Charge Lauri Lepik (Estonia), and Charge Stasys Sakalauskas (Lithuania) attended for the Baltic missions; Ambassador at Large Collins, EUR DAS Wayne, D staffer Goldberg, and EUR/NB director van Voorst (notetaker) joined the Acting Secretary. End summary.

3. The Acting Secretary opened by explaining that he wanted to provide the Baltic governments with an initial sketch of the latest U.S. thinking on the Baltic dimension of our overall European security policy. For some time the USG had been considering how best to promote the integration of the Baltics into the western community; we were now ready to consult with the Baltics and others on a three-track approach to move us towards this objective. U.S. ambassadors in the Baltics would follow up the Acting Secretary's consultation with briefings in Vilnius, Riga, and Tallinn. An interagency team planned to visit the region in September for more detailed discussions with the Baltic governments.

4. The Acting Secretary then outlined the highlights of action plan's three tracks. The objective of Track 1, which covered multilateral and regional activities, was to ensure that the Baltics make progress towards and ultimately achieve success in their aspirations to join Western security and economic institutions. He assured the representatives the U.S. would find every occasion to reaffirm and make good our position that NATO should be open to all interested states in a self-selecting process that was inclusive rather than exclusive. Talbott said the USG would give no credence to any attempt to rule out a country or a group of countries as future members. In

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addition, the U.S. would continue to assist the Baltics and other interested countries with their preparations to meet the Alliance's accession requirements.

5. Talbott said the U.S. appreciated the Baltic aspiration for membership in the EU and would use our good relations with key Union members to press vigorously for expeditious membership for qualified Baltic applicants. The Acting Secretary noted that he had already raised this point in his discussions with the leading EU states.

6. Pointing to the OSCE's role as a forum for regional discussion and conflict resolution, Talbott said the U.S. would continue to support the resident missions in Riga and Tallinn and; in the OSCE itself, would energize discussions with regional players -- including the Russians -- on practical steps to implement and advance OSCE goals in the Baltics.

7. The Acting Secretary noted that an important subset of Track 1 was promotion of more intense regional cooperation

as a fundamental way to increase security and confidence in the Baltic littoral area. The U.S. would therefore strongly support regional cooperation initiatives such as those under development in the Baltic Sea States Council. For our part the U.S. would, despite budgetary difficulties, continue our effort to contribute to the Baltic Peacekeeping Battalion (BaltBat). We would also work with other donors and the Baltic states themselves to rationalize military assistance efforts, improve the national defense capability of the Baltics, promote NATO interoperability of their commands, and increase intra-Baltic military cooperation. The U.S. intended to push ahead on implementation of the regional airspace initiative (RAT).

8. Under Track 2, Talbott said the U.S. would do everything possible to stabilize the region by fostering normal relations between Russia and the Baltics. The USG would use its good offices to work towards a practical resolution to border disputes. The Acting Secretary stated that should Russia -- rhetorically or otherwise -- try to bully or intimidate the Baltics, the U.S. would continue to speak up and would find an appropriate way to discourage Moscow from activities impinging on Baltic sovereignty and territorial integrity.

9. Under Track 3, the USG proposed an intensified program of bilateral activities supporting Baltic sovereignty, expanding our security relationship, increasing trade and investment, and countering crime and corruption. Talbott

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suggested that a useful contribution would be a "Charter of U.S.-Baltic Partnership and Cooperation" spelling out the fundamentals of our relationship (sovereignty support, human rights, rule of law, free markets, security cooperation); this could be signed at an appropriately high-visibility opportunity. Official bilateral contacts were increasing and would continue to do so, Talbott observed, pointing to a steady stream of visitrs in both directions and an increase in the frequency of three-on-one as well as one-on-one official meetings. Talbott promised regular, real-time briefings for the Baltic governments on U.S.-Russia contacts as well as regular U.S.-Baltic consultations as the NATO enlargement process moved ahead over the coming months.

10. The U.S. would also stress the intensification of our bilateral security links with the Baltics, Talbott said. He observed that we were expanding the IMET program for

the Baltic states and were also developing a modest arms relationship to help the Baltic defense forces meet their legitimate needs. The U.S. would schedule additional joint exercises with Baltic units, and would continue to develop mil-to-mil contacts and the relationship between the Department of Defense and the Baltic defense establishments.

11. To help the Baltics move ahead with economic reform and development, the administration would seek to raise the level of U.S. trade and investment in the Baltics by mobilizing the resources of agencies such as the Commerce Department, OPIC, TDA, and Exim. Talbott said the USG would also push forward aggressively to complete the required investment and taxation treaties.

12. Concluding the roundup of bilateral activities under Track 3, the Acting Secretary characterized organized crime in the Baltics as a scourge and said the U.S. would establish an FBI presence in the region to help the Baltic governments deal with this growing concern.

13. To Ambassador Kalnins's query asking whether the U.S. intended to publicize the action plan at any point, Talbott suggested that all parties regard it as a set of themes rather than a single policy initiative. The plan did not constitute a radical new proposal; it consolidated and intensified programs already underway. Moreover, the Acting Secretary thought that the themes suggested in the plan should be worked into our public statements -- the Charter signing would be an excellent opportunity for this -- to make the point that the Baltics are not a peripheral region in the European security architecture but an area

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on which U.S. attention is sharply focused.

14. Saying he welcomed U.S. assistance to normalize relations between the Baltics and Russia, Kalnins said a scheduled for September was in jeopardy due to Russian ire over an August 22 resolution of the Latvian parliament regarding the Soviet occupation. Kalnins requested U.S. intervention to persuade the Russians not to cancel the meeting. Talbott agreed the matter should go on the U.S. agenda with Moscow; Amb. Collins noted he was already engaged in this effort. Charge Lepik asked the U.S. to facilitate a meeting between Primakov and Estonian Foreign Minister Kallas, again in uncertain status following several Russian cancellations this spring.

TALBOTT

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