

October 29, 1996

**Cable, Secretary of State to US Embassy Vilnius,
'Acting Secretary and Lithuanian Fonmin on NATO
Enlargement'**

Citation:

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Summary:

On October 8, 1996, Acting Secretary of State Strobe Talbott met with Lithuanian Foreign Minister Povilas Gylys to discuss NATO enlargement. Gylys warned that excluding Lithuania from early rounds of accession would damage its security and risk public perception of Western disengagement, while expressing concern over Kaliningrad's future role. Talbott reassured Gylys of the US commitment to Baltic inclusion, emphasized that NATO's door remains open, and framed the Baltic Action Plan as a complementary—not compensatory—measure to support accession and regional stability.

Original Language:

English

Contents:

Original Scan

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SUBJECT: ACTING SECRETARY AND LITHUANIAN FONMIN ON NATO ENLARGEMENT

1. (u) classified by carol van voorst, director, eur/nb, for reasons 1.5 (b,d).

summary:

2. (s) on october 8, acting secretary talbott discussed lithuania's views on nato enlargement with lithuania's foreign minister Povilas gylys. gylys said lithuania wished to be included in that group of countries considered to be "in the process" of joining nato, and cautioned that a "limited" nato enlargement would cause lithuania to lose security. lithuania supports the nato/russia dialogue, but believes that the russian people are not concerned about nato enlargement. he warned issues involving kaliningrad would need to be addressed in the future. talbott briefed gylys on the nato enlargement process, stressed that nato's doors inust reinain open, includin the baltics, andstressedthatn to's firstt tranche will not be he last. end summary.

3. (s) on october 8, lithuanian foreign minister gylys, in the U.S. for the unga, called on acting secretary talbott to discuss lithuania's thoughts on the nato enlargement process. gylys said lithuania preferred to keep its thoughts on the nato enlargement process in diplomatic channels. however, secretary perry's recent statement that the baltics would not be included in the first group of countries had caused a public reaction in the region that led to the september 28 joint statement on security by the baltic presidents.

4. (s) gylys noted that as we approach the december nac and the mid-1997 nato summit it appears that three or four countries will be named in the first group to join. lithuania believes it should be designated in that group of central european countries considered to be "in the process" of joining nato. he said the baltic countries and others intend to use Partnership for peace (pfp) as the channel to nato. gylys stressed that it is important that all nato candidate countries be declared as such and that the accession process should begin for all at the same time -- even if states should be admitted to the allianceat differenttimesasthey meetthe membership criteria. If instead nato proceeds with a "limited" enlargement involving only a few countries, lithuania believes

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that it will lose the security status it has achieved during the past several years. he said, "if the process moves without us, we will lose security." quoting hegel, gylys said, "if you have, you will get; if you don't have, you will lose."

5. ~~(c)~~ gylys said lithuania welcomed the development of a special relationship between nato and russia. lithuania has carefully developed its own constructive relationship with russia. while it has settled the transit issue with russia, the government of lithuania knows the future is uncertain. kaliningrad may become a problem, especially if it becomes the border between nato and the east. gylys noted that lithuania wants cooperative security in europe and the council of baltic sea states helps this. but a limited nato enlargement will leave lithuania isolated and force it to assume too great a burden of responsibility. "if a big neighboring country turns clumsily, it leaves bruises at its border, even in a good mood. but if the mood turns bad, it could be most painful for us," gylys added. "We can't neglect russia, but they are playing their own game." gylys said according to recent polls, 40 percent of russians believe that if nato cooperates with

russia they do not consider nato an enemy; clearly, the russian leadership is exaggerating fear of nato enlargement for its own purposes.

6. ~~(c)~~ gylys noted that lithuania has invested heavily in westernization and modernization, and "we have little to learn from the east." any turn away from this western orientation would be a loss -- "not today, not next year, but in five years." he said lithuania is prepared for the scenario of a limited nato enlargement, where favored countries would be treated as members of a first group. "we know nato wants to keep its door open for others, but we know from experience that the crosswinds of history can bang doors shut."

7. the acting secretary responded by reassuring gylys that secretary perry's comments had been misconstrued and that lithuania has no cause for concern. he said the president, vice-president, the secretary and secretary perry believe fervently that if nato enlargement serves the larger cause of enhancing common security, the doors must remain open, including to the baltics. talbott noted gylys' frequent use of the term "limited nato enlargement." he assured him that the first, second and third enlargements will not be the last. lithuania is making substantial progress toward the west, and deserves to be part of it.

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8. ~~(c)~~ on russia, talbott said the u.s. has worked on a nato-russia dialogue for over a year, but the russians only began to get serious after their elections. simultaneously they are trying to 1) stop the process, (2) limit enlargement to the first tranche, and (3) seek the most advantageous position if (1) and (2) fail. in this context the russian deputy foreign minister set forth propositions to guide the nato/russia relationship, one of which is that the baltic states and ukraine will never join. the usg has said categorically and repeatedly that it would never accept the exclusion of the baltic countries and ukraine from nato.

9. ~~(c)~~ talbott noted that the baltic action plan was intended to address some of lithuania's concerns. the purpose of the plan was to keep the nato door open and to help states meet nato's accession standards. gylys responded that the presence and activity of the u.s. in central europe and the baltics was welcome. he appreciated the plan's bilateral political and economic

initiatives, and the elements of regional cooperation. he noted the plan's offer to help in lithuania's dialogue with the russians "when we need it." lithuania accepts U.S. assurances that the baltic action plan is not an alternative or compensation for nato membership, but gylys feared that the public perceived it that way.

10. gylys warned that kaliningrad should not be forgotten, since the enclave will be part of any dialogue involving lithuania's integration with the west. talbott commended gylys for the lithuanian/polish relationship, and urged him to discuss issues on kaliningrad with the russians as well.

11. (u) also attending the meeting on the Lithuanian side were Ambassador Alfonsas Eidintas, MFA Americas A/S Audra Plepete, PolCouns Vitautas Zalys, and Poloff Stasys sakalauskas. the u.s. side included d staff phil goldberg, eur/nb director van voorst, and baltic desk officer evans.

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