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February 21, 2024

The Honorable Mike Johnson
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
2433 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
317 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Support for NATO and Ukraine

Dear Speaker Johnson, Majority Leader Schumer, Leader Jeffries, and Leader McConnell:

We write to urge your continued support for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and for the U.S. leadership role in this alliance. American Friends of the Czech Republic is an independent non-profit American advocacy organization that promotes close political, military, and economic ties between the United States and the Czech people. In fact, our organization was founded to advance the inclusion into the NATO Alliance of the central and eastern European nations that in 1989 had thrown off decades of Russian communist domination and sought to reclaim their rightful Western heritage. The inclusion of these countries - as steadfast partners - has immeasurably strengthened U.S. security and prosperity over the last quarter-century.

When we testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in 1997, we emphasized that the addition of the Czechs and their neighboring countries would politically, militarily, and morally strengthen the U.S. and NATO alike. This has proven true across a number of initiatives, conflicts, and partnerships to date.

Czech armed forces currently participate in several NATO-led operations abroad in Kosovo, the Baltic States, Iraq, Kuwait, and Slovakia. They supported U.S. efforts in Afghanistan and Bosnia, with U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin III holding the Czech Republic to be a vital NATO ally.

The NATO security umbrella has enabled the countries added since 1998 to prosper economically - to America's benefit. The Czech military recently accepted delivery of modern attack and multirole Bell combat helicopters, and in January of this year, procure 24 F-35 combat aircraft produced by Lockheed Martin. The Czech commitment to this U.S.-led program is a direct investment in the valued

partnership that strengthens interoperability, which significantly increases NATO's deterrent capability overall.

None of these benefits to U.S. security and jobs would have occurred without NATO and its expansion. We therefore appeal to you to maintain our country's unqualified support for the NATO alliance, which has fostered the longest period of peace and prosperity in Europe's history. We moreover urge you to continue to support the heroic struggle of the Ukrainian people against Russian aggression, especially in view of the likely incalculable increased cost for the U.S. and its NATO partners should Russia advance to NATO's borders.

Much more is at stake than the freedom and independence of Ukraine itself. Should Western resolve falter and Ukraine be lost, the U.S. will find itself actively and expensively compelled to deploy sizable deterrence forces to counter a looming Russian presence intent on instilling a security vacuum in which freedom, democracy, and prosperity would wither. The commitment of these resources on a Russian dictated chess board would only further thin the ability of the U.S. and Europe to counter the sustained and long-term threat of China globally. An abandonment of Ukraine by the West would – in moral repugnancy – exceed the abandonment of Czechoslovakia via the Munich Agreement of 1938.

We thank you for consideration of our appeal, and we stand ready as a resource to support the Congress given our organization's proud legacy in support of NATO expansion, peace, and prosperity.

Sincerely,



Roger Kodat
President

CC:

Chairman & Ranking Member House Appropriations Committee
Chairman & Ranking Member Senate Appropriations Committee
Chairman & Ranking Member House Armed Services Committee
Chairman & Ranking Member Senate Armed Services Committee
Chairman & Ranking Member House Foreign Affairs Committee
Chairman & Ranking Member Senate Foreign Relations Committee
U.S. Delegation NATO Parliamentary Assembly
Congressional Czech Caucus