



## RSC POLICY NOTE

### THE U.S. POLICY SHIFT ON AID TO UKRAINE: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE BALTIC STATES

The repercussions from the Trump Administration's abrupt cutoff of military assistance and real-time intelligence to Ukraine continue to reverberate throughout Eurasia. This U.S. move to reverse its policy supporting Ukraine since Russia's failed invasion was accelerated after the embarrassment of the televised White House assault by President Trump and his Vice President against Ukrainian President Zelenskyy. But the wider implications are already visible, as demonstrated by the necessity for a coordinated response from the European Union (EU). The crisis has also triggered concern in the Baltic region.<sup>1</sup>



As the Oval Office clash has seemingly only emboldened Russia, the leaders of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania rushed to embrace Ukraine with pledges of renewed support. The three Baltic states are particularly sensitive to Russian aggression, due both to their history and their current vulnerability as frontline NATO member states.

But even for the volatile Trump Administration, the value of the Baltic states as partners and stakeholders in Western security remains clear. These three Baltic countries not only meet NATO's spending benchmark but also stand out as the alliance's top contributors as a percentage of gross national product (GDP). Moreover, the Baltic region also hosts more than 2,000 American troops, with approximately 1,000 in Lithuania and 600 each in Estonia and Latvia, as well as NATO deployments from Britain, Canada, and Germany.

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<sup>1</sup> Kishinevskiy, Denis and Reid Standish, "Baltic Countries Feel Aftershocks from US Suspension of Ukraine Military Aid," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), 6 March 2025.

<https://www.rferl.org/a/trump-zelenskyy-putin-ukraine-war-baltics-military-aid/33337368.html>

Yet there has already been a worrisome recent development, as Washington has cut funding for a key European effort to provide Ukraine with cybersecurity support. And Trump's move against Ukraine has also threatened Estonia in particular.

More specifically, the move is especially worrying to Estonian efforts to bolster support for Ukraine, according to Tanel Sepp, the Estonian ambassador-at-large for cyber policy. Ambassador Sepp, who also serves as a key leader of the Tallinn Mechanism,<sup>2</sup> explained that the program, which was established at the end of 2023 to coordinate cyber civilian support to Ukraine between the U.S., Canada, NATO, the European Union and almost a dozen other European nations,<sup>3</sup> has been hit by Washington's funding cut. This comes after the Tallinn Mechanism successfully garnered over 200 million Euros from donors and foreign aid support, with over half has been guaranteed by the U.S. government.<sup>4</sup>

Against that backdrop, the leaders of the Baltic states are widely expected to only continue their drive for greater European resolve in forging a robust resistance to a dangerously emboldened Russia. And as a frontline, the Baltic region appears to be, once again, a critical arena to confront Russia, with or without American support.

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## RSC Publications

To promote informed debate about issues related to Armenian public policy, particularly in the areas of security and foreign policy, and to promote critical thinking about Armenia's post-war strategy, the RSC publishes various analytical reports and assessments. This *RSC Policy Note*, in contrast to longer in-depth analytical *RSC Policy Reports*, offers a brief and concise assessment of significant issues and developments effecting Armenia and the wider South Caucasus region.

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<sup>2</sup> Tallinn Mechanism, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Estonia, 31 December 2024.  
<https://www.vm.ee/en/international-law-cyber-diplomacy/cyber-diplomacy/tallinn-mechanism>

<sup>3</sup> A Year of Cyber Support for Ukraine: The Tallinn Mechanism's Milestone, European Union External Action Service (EEAS), 19 December 2024.  
[https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/year-cyber-support-ukraine-tallinn-mechanism-milestone\\_en](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/year-cyber-support-ukraine-tallinn-mechanism-milestone_en)

<sup>4</sup> Tallinn Mechanism raises €200 million to support Ukraine's resilience in cyberspace, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Estonia, 20 December 2024.  
<https://www.vm.ee/en/news/tallinn-mechanism-raises-eu200-million-support-ukraines-resilience-cyberspace>