

This evening the President of the United States, Barack Obama, called the presidents of the Baltic states, Toomas Hendrik Ilves, Andris Bērziņš and Dalia Grybauskaitė to consult on the situation in Crimea.

The four heads of state discussed Russia's military invasion of the Crimean Peninsula, which violates the territorial integrity of Ukraine, and deemed unacceptable by the Baltic and American presidents. The current crisis is also damaging the security of Europe in general.

President Obama stressed that, due to their historical experiences, he highly appreciates the opinions of the Baltic countries in the security situation that has emerged. The Estonian Head of State said the Baltic states fully understand – first military occupation, followed by the organisation of a referendum – as this is exactly how the Soviet Union deprived us of our independence in 1940.

"Russia is currently following the same script in Crimea and has violated all the rules, both written and unwritten," President Ilves told.

During the telephone conversation, the parties jointly stated that NATO's principle of collective defence is more important than ever with the events of the last several of weeks. The European Union and the USA have taken their first steps, but the military invasion of the Crimean Peninsula is not over and the activities of the international observers are still blocked. During their discussion with the US Head of State, the presidents of the Baltic countries emphasised the powerful role played by Washington in the crisis. The decisive approach of the USA can and will encourage other influential democratic countries outside the European Union as well.

The crisis in Ukraine currently is not an immediate threat to the NATO and EU members. However, the actions of Russia have aggravated the security situation in Europe in general and, therefore, the visible presence of the Alliance – and in particular the United States of America – would be a deterrent for those whose ambitions need to be curtailed, while contributing to the confidence of the Baltic states.

Already on Thursday, six US fighters landed in Lithuania, representing additional support for

NATO's air policing mission in the Baltic States.

Office of the President
Public Relations Department
Phone +372 631 6229