

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you, I can honestly say that it is genuinely an honor to be invited to speak here tonight for many reasons. One is that the U.S. Army is a great institution. Me growing up in the United States – I did get rid of my Tony Soprano accent – I knew a number of Green Berets, and fifteen out of them were Estonians. For these men, the US was the right place to serve, because the US is a place of liberty and freedom.

That was the same for my parents. This is why I'm eternally grateful to the United States and to the U.S. military – and especially today. For I rarely get to speak before an audience that gets it. General Hodges gets it, the SACEUR gets it, the U.S. Army gets it. So it is a very heartfelt "Happy Birthday", Happy 240th Anniversary.

I'd like to think we in Estonia get it too. We do our share, be it 2% in defense expenditure, or in Iraq where we were among the first in and the last out, and in Afghanistan as well, where we fought without any caveats in the middle of Taliban-land in Helmand Province. And on a proportional basis took along with the US and Canada, the largest number of casualties.

Of course we wish we didn't have to get it, but today Europe looks a lot more like this slide than we ever wanted. We thought we'd gotten over the divisions of post-war Europe, that old stereotypes were done and over with. And that maps like this would be a thing of the past.

Yet, as a recovering cold-warrior myself – I spent the 80s and early 90s in Munich at Radio Free Europe – it strikes me that we are heading back to the days of confrontation that I knew for my entire life until the fall of the wall. Except back then we – that is, the liberal democratic West, the trans-Atlantic alliance – were more or less all on board. Today, though, it is far from clear that we always have that moral clarity – knowing who the bad guys are.

We live in a moment where creating and maintaining a competitive, prosperous and secure Europe and trans-Atlantic space faces challenges not only in the military field, but also on a number of other fronts. Today we have ISIL or Daesh at the Eastern end of the Mediterranean,

we have a refugee crisis in Southern Europe, and an economic melt-down in one NATO and EU member. Any one of these would be daunting. But in addition we see, a quarter century after what we thought was the end of the cold war, a revanchist and revisionist Russia that has opted out of the global and European security arrangements built up since WWII. From the UN charter forbidding use of force to change borders to the 1975 Helsinki Final act and the 1990 CSCE Paris Charter all guaranteeing the territorial integrity and freedom to chose one's alliances for its signatories, these foundations of our security have been rendered void and null.

And all of this has happened with frightening speed. Ukraine is not just a game changer. It's an altogether different ball game. And while the US has stepped up to the plate, some of us in Europe are still watching a FIFA soccer match taking place on a TV screen.

Some of us were already quite concerned about what happened in Georgia in 2008 when Russia invaded that country. But we were told we were paranoid, that this was a one-off and besides we need to get back to business as usual.

Yet as I said, the frightening speed with which we saw the occupation of parts of a sovereign state in just a matter of days last year and the clear and ongoing attempt to turn Ukraine into a big Bosnia-Herzegovina means we had better get our act together.

That is why I have called the year 2014 an *annus horribilis*, as opposed to the *annus mirabilis* 25 years ago that gave our part of the world the chance to opt for freedom and democracy. We thought that what came to an end in 1989, was not just the Cold War or even the Second World War. We were hoping that what came to an end were the political systems of three centuries: the balance of power and imperial urge. Today we know that it has not ended.

I hate numerology but it is really odd to see that a quarter of a century after the amazing flowering of democracy throughout Eastern Europe we have this roll-back happening right before our eyes. And now, we see the worst ghosts of the 20th century returning. We have seen a criminal occupation of Crimea as the Bundeskanzlerin said just a few weeks ago. We've seen a war waged under the cover of old ideological long, long discredited ideas such as the existence of co-ethnics abroad.

Today, I am personally most concerned about the "Zwischenländer", those countries between

NATO and Russia where there are new attempts to form spheres of influence, where in fact the democratic choice of those countries has no role as to what they can do, they have no say about their future. This, I would argue, is a major denial of human dignity.

Maintaining the unity within the EU vis-à-vis Russia is also essential. We have demonstrated unprecedented and historic consensus in response to the Russia's imperial urges. The precise, even surgical sanctions that we have seen from the part of the US and Europe have been successful. The sanctions have also helped to raise the motivation to sit down at the negotiation table as we have seen in the case of Minsk 2.

The decision of all EU members to impose sanctions on Russia was not an easy task. It marks a landmark departure from the phase of declaring simply a „grave concern". This is the real beginning of the common EU foreign policy. Clearly an unpleasant surprise to Russia.

On the NATO front, the primary treaty-based tie that binds the United States and Europe, we have not yet seen everybody from this side of the Atlantic fully roused from the lulling rhetoric of the post-cold war era where we continue to hope that short-term measures will tide us over and we will be back to the status quo ante of Peace Love and Woodstock. The NATO Summit last year focused on reassurance – reassuring countries like mine, telling us we shouldn't worry. But we already feel good. Rather we, and I mean all of NATO, need to let Russia to know that NATO is serious about defense.

It seems that many leaders hope that the crisis will somehow fade away, that this is just a blip, that we don't want to recognize that our large neighbor to the East has opted for authoritarian nationalism and rolling back fundamental freedoms in his own country and now seems intent on pushing this upon his neighbors. Or realized that even if by waving a magic wand the crisis in Ukraine is resolved, the fundamental anti-Western and anti-democratic posture on Russia today combined with an increase in military expenditure and a willingness to project force, means we have to rethink of our approach to defense in NATO.

Despite commitments made at the NATO summit last September, some allies continue to reduce defense spending and the number of countries that do fulfill the two percent of GDP commitment is in fact declining. We in Estonia do not quite understand how this is possible.

It is symptomatic that in the Pew Study of Attitudes toward NATO published this week, publics in Europe overwhelmingly believe that the US would come to the defense of its allies. Yet when asked if their own countries should come to the defense of other allies, 53% of French, 51% of Italian, and 58% of German respondents said their countries should not come to the defense of an ally attacked by Russia. Nota Bene, we are not talking about defending some non-NATO country in Europe but defending ones own allies.

Of course, NATO allies have their treaty commitments and I know governments will honor them. After all, the moment the North Atlantic Treaty Article Five fails to work is the moment 'One for all and all for one' collapses into 'no one for anyone' and NATO becomes an empty piece of paper.

This means, ladies and gentlemen, that we must do far more to develop what was the foundation of our defense in the Cold War, namely deterrence. We must ensure that our defense in peace-time is credible enough to exclude any possibility of testing the alliance.

This requires a strong NATO presence in terms of troops, equipment and exercises in the countries that have seen a dramatic increase in transponderless flights and snap exercises practicing invasion of neighbours, all of which we have seen in my part of the world.

The countries that have benefited most from what was once called "the Peace-dividend", countries no longer "front-line" states need to begin to grasp that you can't have a two-tiered NATO where you expect the US to come to your aid but won't aid others, where you expect permanent stationing of US troops on your own territory but deny this to others.

And of course it means realizing that in this Brave New World of European Security in 2015 we cannot be cowards, shirk our commitments and hope someone else will come to your assistance while denying that to others.

What will follow next? We do not know. We believe in a strong deterrence in addition to dialogue. And the sanctions must remain in place. Europe needs to adapt the conditionality of its sanctions to the realities of the second Minsk agreement. It must state very clearly that lifting

sanctions can only be discussed once the process has run its full course and Ukraine has regained control of its eastern border. Rolling back sanctions at any intermediary stage must be avoided.

The challenge is far from over. Times are difficult not only for Ukraine, but for Europe as such, and for liberal democratic values. We like Germany taking a leadership now in the EU and are very happy with the role Germany is playing in foreign policy at this time. Chancellor Merkel has shown a remarkable leadership, often being the one holding the European foreign policy together.

For people like me and my compatriots, for whom the United States has been a beacon for 70 years, we are grateful for your presence in Estonia. This is why we continue to do our share, why, among other reasons, 94% of population has consistently supported our conscription-based army. It's why my son, who went straight from college in the U.S. to serve in the Estonia's Army, today flies in from Brussels for reserve exercises out his own pocket.

Estonia shares with the US Army its motto, "This We'll Defend". We like the US Army. A lot. So come visit us. As I told the Abrams Tank unit at our 14 000 man exercise last month, we also have great craft beer.