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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-4702

ARMED SERVICES

June 28, 2018

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Trump:

As a co-chair of the Friends of Norway Caucus and a senior member of the House Armed Services Committee, I read your June 19 letter to Norwegian Prime Minister Solberg with great concern. I share your desire to see all NATO member states meet their goal of spending 2 percent of GDP on defense, but believe your needlessly provocative letter omitted key facts.

At the 2014 Wales Summit, NATO member states committed to spending 2 percent of GDP on defense *by 2024*. Your letter neglects to mention this date, suggesting that Norway is currently failing to uphold its commitment. You also did not mention that NATO members further committed to spending 20 percent of their defense budgets on equipment; Norway currently spends 25.5 percent. This does not excuse Norway from its other obligations, but provides badly-needed context.

You are not alone in your support for ensuring allies meet their fiscal commitments. Earlier this year at the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, representatives from NATO member states reaffirmed these commitments, declaring:

“[the] threat environment makes it even more necessary that nations increase defence expenditure in real terms as GDP grows and move towards the guideline of spending 2% GDP for defence by 2024, increase annual investments to 20% or more of total defence expenditures, and meet NATO agreed guidelines for deployability and sustainability.”

As you noted, some of Norway’s equipment spending is on U.S. made products like the F-35 and P-8. U.S. companies face international competition in the defense industry. American workers would likely be upset if your unnecessarily combative language led allies to seek different suppliers.

I also hope you understand that Norway’s importance cannot be expressed in a single number. Norwegian servicemembers have fought side-by-side with U.S. forces in Afghanistan and flown combat missions over Libya. Norwegian companies also make high quality equipment U.S. servicemembers rely on. Norway further contributes to U.S. national security by being a world leader in development assistance.

The U.S. and Norway share a long history of friendship, rooted in support for democracy and respect for human rights. More recently, this bond has been strengthened by a common threat.

Russia has violated both countries' sovereignty, simulating attacks against defense sites in Norway and intervening in the 2016 Presidential election in support of your candidacy.

You wrote that "it will... become increasingly difficult to justify to American citizens why some countries continue to fail to meet our shared collective security requirements." If this sentence is a veiled threat to reduce U.S. commitment to a NATO ally, it is written in extraordinarily poor judgment. But if you are genuine in seeking to better explain to the American people Norway's contributions to collective security, I hope my letter may serve as some assistance.

Finally, it is my expectation that a strong message will emerge from the upcoming NATO summit: resolute opposition to Russian adventurism in Crimea and the Donbass and unity in the face of election meddling. At your subsequent meeting with President Putin, you should convey this message forcefully and accurately while emphasizing the strong bipartisan support in the U.S. for sanctions imposed in response to Russian provocations.

Sincerely,



Rick Larsen
Member of Congress
Washington State, 2nd District

CC: James N. Mattis, Secretary of Defense