



*Embassy of the United States of America*

Reykjavik, Iceland

## **Regarding Sanctions**

Robert Cushman Barber

Ambassador of the United States of America

I am writing in response to comments that appeared in a January 4, 2016 article in Morgunblaðið regarding U.S. sanctions imposed on Russia for its actions in Ukraine.

The United States believes strongly in the need to maintain sanctions against Russia until it fully meets its obligations under the Minsk Agreement. These sanctions were put in place to address a serious violation of international norms and national sovereignty in a constructive and thoughtful way without resort to force. We all rely upon, and must protect, an international system that demands respect for national sovereignty. Without this principle, we are all at risk. For this reason, it is important for all nations that believe in rule of law to stand in solidarity.

In terms of the specific allegations in the article that the United States sought exemptions for Russian-supplied helicopter parts, I would note that in November 2015 we allowed for delivery of spare parts needed by the Afghan military for its Mi-17 helicopters. These items were covered under nonproliferation sanctions imposed under the Iran, North Korea, and Syria Nonproliferation Act, not those sanctions related to Ukraine, and this action was for the limited, specific purpose of helping the security forces of Afghanistan combat terrorism.

The United States, like Iceland and other nations, has experienced the impact of the Ukraine-related sanctions and Russian retaliatory measures. We recognize there is a cost. Between 2014 and 2015, for example, U.S. exports to Russia declined significantly due to sanctions, with the agricultural sector being particularly hard hit.

We understand that such measures have had an effect on the Icelandic fishing industry and recognize the potential for a disproportionate impact on certain rural communities. However, we believe that it is important that as NATO Allies we continue to uphold the essential principles at stake if we are to deter aggression and efforts to change borders by force of arms.