

FACT SHEET: The United States and Central and Eastern Europe: Enduring Cooperation

For more than 20 years the United States and the countries of Central and Eastern Europe have worked together to build a Europe that is whole, free, and at peace. Today, we are advancing our common defense and security goals, promoting democracy and rule of law, and enhancing energy security and diversification.

Defense and Security Cooperation

In response to Russia's illegal military intervention and attempted annexation of Ukrainian territory, the United States, along with our NATO allies, has undertaken a number of steps to reinforce our military presence across Central Europe and the Baltics. The United States has supported NATO efforts to reassure allies through an increased and persistent air, land, and sea presence. For example, the United States has augmented its contributions to NATO's Baltic Air Policing Mission and the U.S.-Poland aviation detachment with additional fighter jets; bolstered its maritime presence in the Black Sea; and deployed company-sized units to Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland for joint training and exercises. We will continue to look for ways to further expand these activities in Central Europe and the Baltics together with our NATO allies, including at the upcoming NATO summit in Wales in September 2014.

The long-term sustainment of our security cooperation is built upon the foundation of our security-sector assistance programs -- Foreign Military Financing (FMF) and the International Military Education and Training (IMET) programs. In light of recent events, these programs have become even more important to help ensure coalition partners and partner foreign governments are equipped and trained to work toward common security goals. In that regard, both FMF and IMET help countries meet their NATO commitments, improve their interoperability, and build their expeditionary capacity.

Last year we marked the 20th anniversary of the U.S. National Guard's State Partnership Program, which began with U.S. National Guard forces partnering with their counterparts in the Baltic states and today extends across almost all of Central and Eastern Europe. We attach great value to these enduring partnerships, which have enhanced mutual understanding between our forces and improved our ability to operate together in the field. As the program enters its third decade, we want to build on their success by working together with our European partners to extend the benefits of the State Partnership Program to additional countries in Africa, the Asia-Pacific, and elsewhere.

Promoting Democracy and the Rule of Law

The United States and its partners in Central and Eastern Europe are dedicated to promoting democracy and the rule of law, both within and outside the region. Through multilateral and bilateral programs, the United States is working with countries in the region to combat corruption and promote greater government transparency,

accountability, and responsiveness. The United States and its European partners co-sponsor development projects in transitioning countries from Eastern Europe and Eurasia, including through the Community of Democracies and the Emerging Donors Challenge Fund. We also support the European Union's long-term objectives of furthering the political association and deepening the economic integration of Eastern Partnership states of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine. A number of these countries have also joined multilateral efforts to assist democratization efforts in the Middle East and North Africa.

The United States regularly works with governments and civil society in Central and Eastern Europe to build institutional capacity on the rule of law and tackling corruption. U.S. assistance supports international training centers such as the Central Europe and Eurasian Law Initiative Institute and the International Law Enforcement Academy, which have been providing high-quality training to police and justice sector professionals. Likewise, the Southeastern European Law Enforcement Center gathers customs and police officers from 12 European countries under one roof to share information and plan joint law enforcement operations with financial and technical assistance from the United States.

Energy Security and Diversification

The United States is working with countries in the region and the entire European Union to help strengthen energy security. Under the auspices of the U.S.-EU Energy Council, we have begun critical discussions on the infrastructure, legal, and financial requirements necessary to increase regional gas interconnections. The United States is working with Romania and Moldova to support the extension of an energy pipeline network into Moldova and is engaged with the EU Commission and the Baltic states to advance the construction of projects to connect the Baltic countries to the EU energy market. We welcome the recent Memorandum of Understanding between Slovak and Ukrainian pipeline operators enabling gas "reverse flow" from Slovakia to Ukraine.

U.S. technical experts are working with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and others to help Central European countries develop public-private investment initiatives to increase conventional gas production from existing fields and boost domestic energy supplies. U.S. specialists are also working with regional partners to provide advice on increasing energy efficiency, which can deliver cost savings to customers and reduce energy requirements. In addition, the United States is working with European governments to share best practices for sustainable unconventional gas development and is helping to develop safe nuclear fuel that can be used in existing reactors and allow a diversification of supply. Later this month, the United States, together with the European Union, Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, and Czech Republic, will convene a Central European forum with Ukraine and other neighbors to identify additional domestic and collective steps to diversify supplies and suppliers. Moreover, the United States is working to help Central and Eastern European countries develop contingency plans for this coming winter to ensure provision of essential service in the event of an energy disruption.