

Baltic Bulletin

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The Kremlin is actively probing NATO borders

Jets, drones, air balloons, and illegal crossings

By Darius Furmonavicius

OPINION

During the final week of October, NATO fighter jets stationed in the Baltic states as part of the Baltic Air Policing mission identified and escorted Russian aircraft on three occasions. On Monday, NATO jets identified a Russian IL-20 reconnaissance aircraft flying in international airspace from mainland Russia to occupied East Prussia, with its transponder turned off, and without a flight plan. On Wednesday, NATO jets took off to identify an IL-78 refueling aircraft that violated Lithuanian airspace for 8 seconds and a 450-meter distance. On Thursday, a Russian IL-76 transport aircraft was identified and escorted. In light of these incursions, the Baltic States clearly deserve to strengthen their NATO air defense mission.

Previously, Russian jets violated Estonian airspace, and NATO allies successfully shot down a drone near a military base in Estonia. The Kremlin's Shahid drone, carrying 2 kg of explosives, crashed near a military

base in Lithuania. Russian drones also violated the airspace of Poland, Denmark, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Sweden, and Belgium. Belarus's recent hybrid attack against Lithuania involved air balloons, resulting in several airport closures in late October.

The purpose of the Kremlin's hybrid actions is to discourage NATO countries from supporting Ukraine.

Over 190 flights and approximately 30,000 passengers were affected. Additionally, on Friday, October 31, Lithuanian border guards denied entry to 63 individuals

attempting to cross illegally into the country from Belarus, marking the highest daily figure in nearly three years. Belarus continues to recruit illegal migrants and direct them into NATO countries, including Lithuania, Poland, and Latvia.

The purpose of the Kremlin's hybrid actions is to discourage NATO countries from supporting Ukraine. It would be wise for the United States and the transatlantic community to impose full oil and gas sanctions on Russia and Belarus, including secondary sanctions on banks and Chinese companies that purchase Russian oil. It is important to provide Ukraine with everything it requires to liberate itself from the Russian occupation, including all long-range missiles and frozen Russian assets. It is also important to demand that Russia terminate the war against Ukraine, cease all hybrid activities against NATO, and withdraw immediately and in an orderly manner all its military and security forces from the occupied areas of Ukraine, East Prussia, and the Northern territories of Japan. Another crucial step would be to invite Ukraine to join NATO during the next NATO summit in Ankara on 7-8 July 2026.

Ronald Reagan's foreign policy of peace through strength facilitated the collapse of the Soviet Union. This policy and concerted action by the West will facilitate the collapse of the Russian Empire, which has been recognized as an international sponsor of terrorism. ▲

U.S. Defense Secretary meets with Baltic counterparts

On July 25, 2025, U.S. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth met with the three Baltic defense ministers at the Pentagon, discussing NATO's military spending goal of 5% GDP.



Pete Hegseth, U.S. Secretary of Defense and three Baltic counterparts Hanno Pevkur (Estonia), Andris Spruds (Latvia), and Dovile Sakaliene (Lithuania). Photo: youtube.com, ANI News



PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Dear friends and supporters.

Russia's unjust and brutal war against the people of Ukraine and its bold hybrid actions against the Baltic countries pose a significant challenge to NATO. Increased hostile rhetoric by Russian government officials towards the Baltic countries must be taken very seriously by our communities.

As a national non-profit organization founded in 1981, BAFL integrates grassroots activism with a congressional relations strategy. Over the decades, BAFL has collaborated closely with our congressional representatives and the White House, which has culminated in the attainment of Baltic freedom, and subsequently, NATO and EU membership. However, the optimistic era of peaceful change in the 1980s and 1990s are now replaced by threats of further occupation and terrorism by Russia.

The generations before us also preserved the cultures that continue to unite our communities. We carry on their legacy through sponsoring events, policy conferences with honored guests, YouTube discussions on topical issues, and issuing Calls to Action on congressional legislation as needed.

BAFL has issued four Calls to Action this past year. We have an ongoing grassroots Call to Action on the Baltic Security Initiative (BSI) and House and Senate Baltic Caucus membership entitled, "Sharing values of freedom, courage and leadership between the U.S. Congress and the Baltic States", updated in September to reflect the new "Baltic Security Assessment Act" in the U.S. House and the status of appropriations and authorization legislation.

In June, during the anniversary of the Baltic deportations, we released a Call to Action entitled, "Support sanctions on Russia to weaken their war machine" to urge greater sanctions on countries that purchase energy from Russia. Despite strong bipartisan support in both chambers, these pieces of legislation still have not been sent to the floor for a vote. We believe that we must keep the pressure on Congress, particularly the House and Senate leadership, to pass this legislation.

On the third anniversary of the invasion of Ukraine in February, we issued a press release and a new Call to Action to support two pending resolutions in Congress that reaffirm Ukraine's territorial integrity. Members of our Board and advocacy advisor regularly attend Ukraine summits in DC.

To directly engage with the staff on Capitol Hill, BAFL regularly sends direct emails to the foreign policy and defense staff on the Hill, reaching thousands of staff with updates on the BSI, at every step of the legislative process from appropriations, mark ups, to floor debates and to conference. This is a powerful way to communicate directly with Capitol Hill. Our advocacy advisor, Anne Smith, meets regularly with Capitol Hill staff and members.

This year, BAFL founder Tony and Danute Mazeika traveled to Lithuania as distinguished speakers at the Seimas. They engaged in a discussion with President Vytautas Landsbergis at an event held at Signatory House, which honored the signatories of the 1918 declaration of independence. This declaration included Danute Mazeika's grandfather, Mykolas Biržiška, and another signatory. Additionally discussed was the renowned 1965 Baltic March on the United Nations.

We will work diligently over the next few months to secure congressional funding for the Baltic Security Initiative. This initiative maintains strong security ties and robust military sales of U.S. equipment to the Baltic countries. Also, we will continue to advocate for the U.S. government to take all necessary legislative, diplomatic, and economic measures to secure victory for Ukraine.

To continue, we urgently need your participation in our campaigns and financial support of our events and this publication. Your gift today of \$100, \$250, \$500, \$1000 - or whatever amount is right for you - will help us continue our important mission to further Baltic relations with the United States. Thank you for your generous support. Every gift is appreciated.

Please scan the QR code below or visit our website www.bafl.com to read and act on our latest campaign in the "Call to Action" tab. Thank you in advance for your advocacy and ongoing financial support.

Conrad Mazeika
President
Baltic American Freedom League



Call to Action



U.S. Baltic security programs receive strong congressional support. but program future uncertain

BAFL advocates for passage of critical legislation

By Anne Smith

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

In July, the Pentagon announced a potential cessation of international security programs to Europe, which raised significant concern among our communities and on Capitol Hill. While Russian provocations, such as recent airspace violations by military aircraft, drones, and other means, are not unprecedented, the timing of the Pentagon's new policy announcement conveyed an inappropriate message. This prompted Baltic Caucus Co-Chair Don Bacon to state on September 5 that the reported cancellation of funding for Baltic Security is "flat out wrong." Senate Baltic Caucus co-chair Senator Durbin stated, "As the Trump Administration plans to suspend the Baltic Security Initiative, leaving our allies vulnerable to Putin, Congress must act." www.durbin.senate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/durbin-announces-ndaa-amendment-to-protect-the-baltic-security-initiative.

In response, our grassroots efforts entailed sending emails and making phone calls to the President. Positive language was included into the National Defense Authorization Act and the Defense Appropriations Act, 2026 to both authorize and appropriate the BSI following the Pentagon's announcement. Thank you to all who participated in our Calls to Action, however, Congress' work is not yet complete!

Impact of the government shutdown. This strong legislative support for the BSI was stalled by the government shutdown. It is now time to rapidly move on the passage of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) and the Defense Appropriations Act. The BSI's most likely path for continuation in fiscal year 2026 hinges on both its authorization and appropriation and there is not much time for the House and Senate to take action.

A bipartisan group of the House and Senate has sent a strong letter to the House/Senate NDAA conferees to move the BSI authorization forward as soon as possible. Letter: www.bacon.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=2809&fbclid=IwZnRzaAOBbstleHRuA2FibQIxMQBzcnRjBmFwcF9pZAo2NjI4NTY4Mzc5AAEeJX03IKmXqxMFiMiOfuO2pUsgW1KcsvgVRLuLS8IGiONXNfpJy-RW1VkNLDg_aem_N8pEnMOSchXrh6V6pHrMDg

The good news. The Senate passed the Defense Appropriations Act, which includes \$225 million for the BSI plus an additional \$35 million for "Integrated Air and Missile Defense" support. The House Defense Appropriations bill does not include a funding level for the BSI but the committee anticipated a continuation of \$225 million for FY26.

The Senate version of the NDAA states that the Secretary of Defense "may establish" the BSI and provide funding for the program at \$350 million for each of the next three years. It is important to note that the NDAA does not provide funding for programs; rather, it authorizes an appropriation amount. www.congress.gov/amendment/119th-congress/senate-amendment/3689/text.

The House enacted more explicit NDAA language stipulating that the Secretary of Defense "shall establish" the BSI. Additionally, the House NDAA includes a crucial waiver for the Baltic countries, enabling the transfer of U.S. equipment from one of them to another. The NDAA must be enacted by December 31, 2025, a likelihood if history is any guide - the NDAA has passed Congress and signed into law for the past 64 years. The House Foreign Affairs Committee also approved an amendment to the State Department Authorization bill supporting the authorization of the BSI.

Appropriations for the BSI could be included in a future continuing resolution, a similar funding measure, or by conferencing the Defense Appropriations Act for 2026 and sending it to the President. These paths are far from assured and we must continue to advocate for a solution to appropriate funds for the BSI at the highest possible level.

Springing into action. In September, representatives from the parliaments of the three Baltic countries, including BAFL conference keynote speaker Zygimantas Pavilionis and Marko Mihkelson, submitted a joint letter to members of the U.S. Congress. The letter expressed their unwavering support for continued funding for the BSI for the upcoming year and their commitment to maintaining their "buy American" policy. Additionally, the letter underscored the significance of our communities, stating, "the million strong Baltic American community is the bedrock of strong transatlantic links between our nations."

Throughout the current year, BAFL has dispatched over 1,000 emails to members of the House and Senate Baltic caucuses and the pertinent congressional committees, including the Senate and House Appropriations, Armed Services, and House Rules committees, which have demonstrated high open rates. This indicates a substantial level of interest from the Baltic community in congressional representation. However, we still need your grassroots participation! While our Advocacy efforts are paying off, we still need more of you to participate through our Call to Action on our website.

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The Baltic States are changing the course of history

Pointers for the West towards a safer future for Europe

By Darius Furmonavicius

OPINION

The Baltic States were occupied by the Soviet Union because of the notorious 'Moscow Pact of 1939-1941', or the Stalin-Hitler pact between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany. Hundreds of thousands of people from Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania were deported to Siberia. "A special military operation" began on 14 June 1941. The then Secretary of State, Sumner Welles, refused to accept the annexation of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania into the Soviet Union in 1940. Radio Free Europe and the Voice of America kept the cause of freedom alive. Peaceful liberation of the Baltic States from their Soviet occupation led to the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.

President George W. Bush when visiting Lithuania stated in 2002 that "Anyone who would choose Lithuania as an enemy has also made an enemy of the United States of America", "No more Munichs. No more Yaltas. The long night of fear and loneliness is over". He added in Warsaw University: "Yalta did not ratify a natural divide; it divided a living civilization. The partition of Europe was not a fact of geography; it was an act of violence. And wise leaders for decades have found the hope of European peace in the hope of greater unity. In the same speech that described an

'iron curtain', Winston Churchill called for 'a new unity in Europe, from which no nation should be permanently outcast'. Consider how far we have come since that speech. Through trenches and shellfire, through death camps and bombed-out cities, through

"The partition of Europe was not a fact of geography; it was an act of violence".

gulags and food lines, men and women have dreamed of what my father called a Europe 'whole and free'. This free Europe is no longer a dream. It is the Europe that is rising around us. It is the work that you and I are called upon to complete. We can build an open Europe - a Europe without Hitler and Stalin, without Brezhnev and Honecker and Ceaușescu and, yes, without Milosevic". And, yes, without war criminal Putin.

Estonia has a border with Russia. Latvia has a border with Russia and Belarus. Lithuania has a border with the Russian military base in the occupied Königsberg area of East Prussia (Kaliningrad region) and with Belarus. The Baltic States seek a permanent U.S. military presence. They have hosted rotational U.S. battalions in Lithuania since 2019, U.K.-led NATO troops in Estonia, Canadian-led NATO troops in Latvia, and German-led NATO troops in Lithuania. The United Kingdom also leads the Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF) and Standing Joint Force Headquarters -usually based in Northwood, London - is now operating across two locations in Lithuania and Latvia, with U.K. liaison officers in Denmark, Estonia, Finland, and Sweden. It coordinates military activities from and between JEF nations in the Baltic Sea region at a time of heightened focus on regional security and cooperation. The former U.K. Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said that this vital

deployment demonstrates our defensive partnerships within the ten-nation alliance of the JEF.

A permanent American presence in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania would significantly bolster U.S. and transatlantic security in Europe by ensuring that the "Suwalki Corridor" from Poland to Lithuania remains open. It would clearly indicate to NATO allies and adversaries that the territorial integrity of the Baltic States and their independence is a vital American interest. Gaps in their defence capabilities would be filled. It would provide the Baltic States with the confidence they need, enabling NATO to deter potential Russian attacks. Washington needs to fix the holes in NATO's deterrent posture in the Baltic region. Then, the probability of a challenge to NATO by the Kremlin would reduce significantly.

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2025 EVENTS

Tallin Black Nights Festival
Tallin, Estonia | November 7-23

Latvian Independence Day
Latvia | November 18

International Conference on Air and Space Law
Riga, Latvia | December 3

Reagan National Defense Forum
Ronald Reagan Presidential Library
Simi Valley, CA, USA | December 5-6

2026 EVENTS

Lithuanian Independence Day
Lithuania | February 16

Estonian Independence Day
Estonia | February 24

Pink Soup Festival
Vilnius, Lithuania | May 30

AABS (Association for the Advancement of Baltic Studies) Biennial Conference
Univ. of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, IL, USA | May 28-31

West Coast Estonian Days
San Francisco, CA, USA | June 26-28

NATO Summit
Ankara, Türkiye | July (TBD)

Advocacy and historical activism – Antanas (Tony) and Danute Mazeika

Founder and activists of the Baltic American Freedom League, Inc.

By Tony Mazeika

**HISTORY
CORNER**

During June and July 2025, Danute and I embarked on a 31-day research mission in Lithuania. Our objective was to compile and disseminate information regarding historic Baltic American advocacy efforts that supported the restoration of independence during the Soviet occupation period (1981-1991). We focused on current Baltic American U.S. congressional campaigns advocating for sustained Baltic military defense and deterrence.

One of several visits and meetings included the Signatories' House Stralis, www.pozicija.org/mes-esame-laisvi-arba-tevyneje-liko-sirdis/, where on July 21st, we shared our cherished memories of Danute's grandparents, signatory Prof. Mykolas Birziska and Branislava, her parents, Ona Birziskaite-Barauskiene and Kazys Barauskas, her aunt Marija Zymantiene, and uncle Stasys Zymantas. Dr. Jolanta Mazyle, from the University of Vilnius, provided us with two opportunities to meet with multi-generational Lithuanian citizens, including survivors of Soviet Siberian imprisonment.

A video was presented depicting the historic "We Are Free And Our Demands Will Be Heard" public rally held in 1965 at Madison Square Garden in New York City. This rally was followed by a march of approximately 14,000 protesters who traveled to the United Nations headquarters to demand the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. The video, accessible at www.youtube.com/watch?v=802MJ_rNY8Y, received positive and emotional responses from the audience, fostering a sense of collective support that had not been previously experienced or acknowledged. Most were unaware of continued public anti-Soviet activities and continued restoration of Baltic independence campaigns.

We further described the history and current activities of the Baltic American Freedom League (BAFL), of which I am an original founding member. Our public support was bolstered by remarks made by Ambassador Retired Ginte Damusis, who provided valuable insights into our congressional activities.



Lithuanian Parliament: Vidmantas Valiusaitis, Tony Mazeika, Parliament student volunteer, Prof. Jolanta Mazyle, Danute Mazeika, Ann Dahlberg, member Lithuania "Saulys" Reserves, SN Arunas Degutis. Photo: Antanas Burokas

Many attendees were unfamiliar with BAFL's congressional initiatives, but were greatly encouraged that significant U.S. congressional support was continuing to protect the sovereignty of the Baltic Nations. We encouraged the audiences to contact friends and relatives in the United States to actively support BAFL advocacy efforts in the U.S. Congress.



Antanas (Tony) and Danute Mazeika.
Photo: Tony Mazeika

The audience freely expressed their opinions on U.S. policy and support, including their efforts to comprehend the policy of the current Trump Administration. They showed great appreciation for the unique relationship between the United States and Baltic-NATO commitment. However, there was significant criticism directed at European

NATO member delays in committing to increased GDP defense commitments. Some individuals supported Trump criticisms of nations with sluggish or inadequate military budget commitments. Conversely, many others indicated that they follow BBC, CNN, and Fox International to obtain information about U.S. comments and events. Notably, this Lithuanian public showed great support for a military victory against Putin in Ukraine.

Danute and I also had the privilege of participating in discussions at the Lithuanian Seimas (Parliament) regarding the release of the latest publication by Vidmantas Valiusaitis. This publication detailed the Lithuanian public and military-organized uprising against Soviet occupation. The struggle preceded the German attack on the Soviet Union by several days. Resistance leaders swiftly organized to declare the restoration of independence before Nazi Germany could overrun Lithuania.

During our stay, we met Lithuanians that were outspoken in their almost natural expectation of cooperative relations with the United States. It became evident that Lithuania, in conjunction with Latvia and Estonia, are facing existential threats from a historically lawless adversary. The greatest challenge lies in establishing a sustained and active support relationship between Baltic Americans and the leadership of the Baltic Nations. This relationship must be nurtured and strengthened to continue the exceptionally close historic ties with the United States. BAFL's greatest challenge is to mobilize and to encourage Baltic Americans to actively promote and participate in congressional campaigns, which would help to fortify and secure continued sovereignty. ▲

TONY MAZEIKA is on BAFL's Board of Directors and an original Founding Member.



... **congressional support** *con't from 3*

Ukraine support. BAFL stands with Ukraine until all lands seized by force are freed from Russian occupation. The Senate NDAA incorporates significant language from the “Abducted Ukrainian Children Recovery and Accountability Act” (S.Res.236) to facilitate the repatriation of the over 19,000 Ukrainian children abducted by Russia. As the House NDAA lacks its own companion resolution (H.Res.564) as an amendment, the provision will proceed to conference.

Senators Graham and Blumenthal are to be applauded for introducing a bill to provide for the designation of Russia as a “state sponsor of terror” for kidnapping children during the war (S.2978) www.congress.gov/bill/119th-congress/senate-bill/2978/text.

In October, the Department of the Treasury announced further sanctions against Russia to diminish its capacity to generate revenue from its energy sector. Despite substantial bipartisan support for the “Sanctioning Russia Act of 2025” (S.1241 and H.R.2548), the bills have yet to be scheduled for floor consideration. The President should be granted this sanctions authority by Congress.

With more details to be released regarding the U.S. force posture review in Europe, it is important to let our policymakers know that the Baltic states are high on Putin’s expansionist agenda.

Congress included language in both the Senate and the House NDAA that would require the Pentagon to certify if troop drawdowns in Europe are in the U.S. national security interest. The Pentagon’s force reductions have commenced with Romania, and further reductions could be announced.

BAFL’s state-of-the-art software will enable us to respond to any number of scenarios on the BSI and other international security funding for the Baltics. If the BSI is not both authorized and appropriated by Congress, there is no guarantee that this program will continue as planned by the Baltic and U.S. militaries over the next few years. This would leave the Baltics unprepared for any contingency in concert with NATO by the time Russia is ready to deploy its military power outside of Ukraine. ▲

House Baltic Caucus Members

Last updated: November 13, 2025

Rep. Donald Bacon (R-NE),
Co-chair
Rep. Salud O. Carbajal (D-CA),
Co-chair
Rep. Robert B. Aderholt (R-AL)
Rep. Gabe Amo (D-RI)
Rep. Becca Balint (D-VT)
Rep. Garland Barr (R-KY)
Rep. Wesley Bell (D-MO)
Rep. Jack Bergman (R-MI)
Rep. Donald Beyer, Jr. (D-VA)
Rep. Brendan F. Boyle (D-PA)
Rep. Julia Brownley (D-CA)
Rep. Nikki Budzinski (D-IL)
Rep. Ken Calvert (R-CA)
Rep. Kat Cammack (R-FL)
Rep. Earl Carter (R-GA)
Rep. Ed Case (D-HI)
Rep. Sheila Cherifilus-McCormick (D-FL)
Rep. Judy Chu (D-CA)
Rep. Gil Cisneros (D-CA)
Rep. Stephen I. Cohen (D-TN)
Rep. Tom Cole (R-OK)
Rep. J. Luis Correa (D-CA)
Rep. Jim Costa (D-CA)
Rep. Joseph Courtney (D-CT)
Rep. Jason Crow (D-CO)
Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart (R-FL)
Rep. Debbie Dingell (D-MI)
Rep. Lloyd Doggett (D-TX)
Rep. Neal Dunn (R-FL)
Rep. Jake Ellzey (R-TX)
Rep. Pat Fallon (R-TX)
Rep. Chuck Fleischmann (R-TN)
Rep. Scott Fitzgerald (D-WI)
Rep. Brian K. Fitzpatrick (R-PA)
Rep. Russell Fry (R-SC)
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Rep. John James (R-MI)
Rep. Julie Johnson (D-TX)
Rep. Marcy Kaptur (D-OH)
Rep. William Keating (D-MA)
Rep. Trent Kelly (R-MS)
Rep. Tim Kennedy (D-NY)
Rep. Kevin Kiley (R-CA)
Rep. Rick Larsen (D-WA)
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Rep. Robert E. Latta (R-OH)
Rep. Michael Lawler (R-NY)
Rep. Ted Lieu (D-CA)
Rep. Seth Magaziner (D-RI)
Rep. Malliotakis (R-NY)
Rep. Brian J. Mast (R-FL)
Rep. Sarah McBride (D-DE)
Rep. Lisa McClain (R-MI)
Rep. Betty McCollum (D-MN)
Rep. Addison McDowell (R-NC)
Rep. James P. McGovern (D-MA)
Rep. Gregory W. Meeks (D-NY)
Rep. Carol D. Miller (R-WV)
Rep. Mariannette Miller-Meeks (R-IA)
Rep. John Moolenaar (R-MI)
Rep. Seth Moulton (D-MA)

Rep. Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC)
Rep. Frank Pallone Jr. (D-NJ)
Rep. Jimmy Panetta (D-CA)
Rep. Christopher Pappas (D-NH)
Rep. Nancy Pelosi (D-CA)
Rep. August Pfluger (R-TX)
Rep. Chellie Pingree (D-ME)
Rep. Michael Quigley (D-IL)
Rep. Jamie B. Raskin (D-MD)
Rep. Guy Reschenthaler (R-PA)
Rep. Deborah Ross (D-NC)
Rep. Pat Ryan (D-NY)
Rep. Maria Elvira Salazar (R-FL)
Rep. Janice D. Schakowsky (D-IL)
Rep. Bradley Scott Schneider (D-IL)
Rep. Austin Scott (R-GA)
Rep. Brad Sherman (D-CA)
Rep. Victoria Spartz (R-IN)
Rep. Christopher H. Smith (R-NJ)
Rep. Suhas Subramanyam (D-VA)
Rep. Claudia Tenney (R-NY)
Rep. Glenn Thompson (R-PA)
Rep. Dina Titus (D-NV)
Rep. Jill Tokuda (D-HI)
Rep. Paul Tonko (D-NY)
Rep. Lori Trahan (D-MA)
Rep. Derek Tran (D-CA)
Rep. Michael Turner (R-OH)
Rep. Derrick Van Orden (R-WI)
Rep. Marc A. Veasey (D-TX)
Rep. Nydia M. Velazquez (D-NY)
Rep. Eugene Vindman (D-VA)
Rep. Ann Wagner (R-MO)
Rep. Tim Walberg (R-MI)
Rep. Randy Weber, Sr. (R-TX)
Rep. Nikema Williams (D-GA)
Rep. Roger Williams (R-TX)
Rep. Addison Graves Wilson (R-SC)
Rep. Robert J. Wittman (R-VA)
Rep. Steve Womack (R-AR)
Rep. Ryan Zinke (R-MT) N=113

Senate Baltic Freedom Caucus Members

Last updated: November 13, 2025

Sen. Richard J. Durbin (D-IL),
Co-chair
Sen. Charles E. Grassley (R-IA),
Co-chair
Sen. Michael Bennet (D-CO)
Sen. Marsha Blackburn (R-TN)
Sen. John N. Boozman (R-AR)
Sen. Theodore Budd (R-NC)
Sen. Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV)
Sen. Susan M. Collins (R-ME)
Sen. John Cornyn (R-TX)
Sen. Tom Cotton (R-AR)
Sen. Steve Daines (R-MT)
Sen. Ruben Gallego (D-AZ)
Sen. Lindsey O. Graham (R-SC)
Sen. Mark Kelley (D-AZ)
Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D-MN)
Sen. Dave McCormick (R-PA)
Sen. Jeffrey Merkley (D-OR)
Sen. Christopher S. Murphy (D-CT)
Sen. Gary Peters (D-MI)
Sen. Pete Ricketts (R-NE)
Sen. Jackey Rosen (D-NV)
Sen. Mike Rounds (R-SD)
Sen. Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH)
Sen. Elissa Slotkin (D-MI)
Sen. Chris Van Hollen (D-MD)
Sen. Roger F. Wicker (R-MS)

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Defence budgets during 2025: Estonia – 3.38% of GDP, Latvia – 3.73% of GDP, and Lithuania – 4% of GDP. Defence budgets approved for 2026: Estonia – 5.4% of GDP, Latvia – 4.9% of GDP, and Lithuania – 5.38% of GDP. It is important to note that the Baltic States changed the course of history once again by supplying Ukraine with weapons before the invasion of 24 February 2022. The Kremlin's plan to capture Kyiv and all of Ukraine in a few days failed partly because of these supplies. Estonia granted Ukraine over a third of its entire defence budget, and Latvia granted it close to a third. Lithuanians (Blue Yellow Lithuania) have collected over 100 million EUR since the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2014 to purchase defence equipment for Ukraine. The Baltic States' defence assistance for Ukraine was over \$1 billion during the last year, the highest per capita in the world.

The Kremlin must lose in Ukraine, but according to former Lithuanian Foreign Minister, Gabrielius Landsbergis, an ambivalent outcome of the Ukraine war won't bring security to Europe. If Putin succeeds in achieving his territorial gains, he will undoubtedly renew his war in Ukraine and elsewhere in the future. According to former Russian Prime Minister Kasyanov, if the Kremlin is not stopped in Ukraine, the next target will be Moldova and the Baltic States.

The threat to the Baltic States—which are, of course, NATO members—as well as to Finland and Sweden by Russia is totally unacceptable.

Winning against Russia must be a strategic goal of the United States

The liberation of all of Ukraine from Russian occupation and inviting Ukraine to join NATO must be one of the key foreign policy priorities for the United States in order to deter a Russian attack on NATO. The United States must place an international embargo on all of the Kremlin's exports of oil to cut the major funding for Putin's war. If the Kremlin is not stopped in Ukraine, the probability of a war between Russia and NATO will

increase greatly. Thus, it is vitally important for the United States to achieve a strategic victory over Russia by supporting Ukraine's efforts to win this war of liberation as soon

as possible. Only the United States can provide Ukraine with all the required weapons, including long-range missiles, tanks, and planes. Only the United States can mobilize the production of the required weapons to adequately supply Ukraine.

It is far more cost-effective to deter Russia from potential aggression than to engage in direct military conflict with Russia. Therefore, U.S. military assistance in the Baltic States is vitally important for the transatlantic alliance and for the stability and security of Europe as a whole. ▲

DARIUS FURMONAVICIUS, PhD is a member of the Royal Institute of International Affairs in London and on BAFL's Board of Directors.

Baltic States changed the course of history once again by supplying Ukraine with weapons before the invasion of 24 February 2022.



Hendrik Leesment, M.D.

Born: Mar 9, 1942, Tartu, Estonia. Died: Nov 6, 2025, Huntington Beach, CA, USA

Dr. HENDRIK LEESMENT was a staunch Estonian patriot whose dedication extended beyond his work with BAFL. This was evident by his involvement with various Estonian and Baltic organizations, especially the student organization, Korporatsioon Rotalia. Here, he guided and mentored many young Estonian men, instilling in them his patriotism and enthusiasm for the eventual restoration of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania's freedom through the efforts of organizations such as BAFL. He was born into an activist household, as his father, Heikki Leesment, Sr., led the Estonian American National Committee for many years. Additionally, Hendrik participated in Baltic Appeal to the United Nations (BATUN) events in New York and Washington, before moving to the west coast to continue his activism with BAFL.

Hendrik Leesment was an orthopedic surgeon, whose medical career was derailed when he suffered a devastating stroke while awaiting a flight to Washington to attend a BAFL event. Despite a partial recovery, he nevertheless continued his work with BAFL until other health challenges arose. His love, commitment to his homeland, and his actions serve as a great inspiration for all.

Celebration of Life will be held on January 10, 2026 at the Los Angeles Estonian House.



REMEMBRANCE

**SHORT TAKES**

LITHUANIAN FOREIGN MINISTER: Lithuanian Foreign Minister Kestutis Budrys on NBC News speaking on Russian drone incursion into NATO territory. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DBd04ZLo2uc>



SECRETARY MARCO RUBIO: Secretary Marco Rubio meets with the Lithuanian Foreign Prime Minister Kestutis Budrys at the State Department. <https://www.state.gov/releases/office-of-the-spokesperson/2025/11/secretary-rubios-meeting-with-lithuanian-foreign-minister-budrys>



JAPAN TO TRAIN UKRAINIAN TROOPS IN LITHUANIA: Japan's Ground Self-Defense Force is hosting a demining training center in Lithuania to train Ukrainian armed forces. <https://thediomat.com/2025/10/japan-is-sending-soldiers-to-lithuania-to-train-ukrainian-troops/>



ESTONIA ELECTIONS: The local elections in Estonia held on October 26th were the first since the country passed legislation in March that bars non-EU citizens from voting. <https://www.Estonia-bans-non-EU-citizens-from-voting>



LATVIA AND DRONE THREATS: Latvian Prime Minister Evika Silina warned of Russian drone threats which can even reach Denmark. Europe must build a drone wall. <https://www.youtube-drone-threats-and-drone-wall>



HELIUM BALLOONS LAUNCHED FROM BELARUS: Two hundred helium balloons launched into Lithuania from Belarus on October 21, 2025. <https://lithuania-closes-main-airport-after-overnight-balloon-barrage/>

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Your donation helps BAFL maintain and expand their legislative impact on Congress. You can become part of this important process by becoming a member of our planned giving *Legacy Society*.

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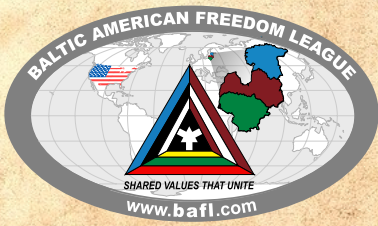
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