

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 6, 2016

The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We are gravely concerned with recent reports of violence and harassment directed toward U.S. diplomats by the Russian authorities and call on you to take immediate action, including recalling the U.S. Ambassador to the Russian Federation and imposing additional U.S. sanctions on the Russian Federation.

Moreover, we are deeply concerned with reports that despite these incidents and Russia's mistreatment of U.S. diplomats, your Administration plans to sign an agreement for military cooperation with the Russians in Syria. According to the Washington Post report on June 30, "[u]nder the proposal, which was personally approved by President Obama and heavily supported by Secretary of State John F. Kerry, the American and Russian militaries would cooperate at an unprecedented level, something the Russians have sought for a long time." The article alleges that U.S. Defense Secretary Ashton Carter opposed this agreement, but "was compelled to go along" and if that is the case, we are outraged that our military's views have apparently been disregarded.

As detailed by the Washington Post on June 27 and June 29, 2016, Russian authorities repeatedly harassed U.S. diplomats and allegedly assaulted a American diplomat in front of the U.S. Embassy in Moscow. When asked about the allegations, Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson Maria Zakharova not only tacitly confirmed this behavior, but also indicated that the harassment will continue "the more U.S. damages relations" with Russia.

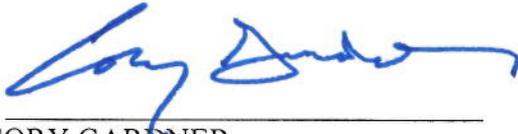
This behavior is unacceptable, contrary to the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, and is an affront to our nation by a Russian government determined to undermine bilateral ties. The assault of one of our diplomats in front of our own Embassy should result in serious consequences for the perpetrators of these crimes.

Therefore, we call on you to immediately recall U.S. Ambassador to the Russian Federation John Tefft to Washington, until such time as the Russian Federation offers an official apology for these incidents and impose additional U.S. sanctions on those individuals that authorized and perpetrated these crimes, including financial sanctions and lifetime visa bans to the United States. We also urge you to declare persona non grata relevant staff from Embassy of the Russian Federation in the United States.

Mr. President, we believe that these incidents are part of a disturbing and proven pattern of aggressive behavior of Russia under President Vladimir Putin that seeks to confront the United States worldwide and undermine our national security. While diplomacy must always be the first step, we must confront this growing threat with requisite force and resolve and not bend to Russia's demands over the objection of our military leaders.

We look forward to your immediate action.

Sincerely,



CORY GARDNER
United States Senator



DAVID PERDUE
United States Senator



JOHNNY ISAKSON
United States Senator



MARCO RUBIO
United States Senator

CC: The Honorable John Kerry, U.S. Secretary of State