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Tal vid Johns Hopkins universitet om den säkerhetspolitiska utvecklingen i norra Europa

Tal av försvarsminister Peter Hultqvist på Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, 16 maj 2017.

Det talade ordet gäller.

Dear Dean, Distinguished professors and students, Ladies and Gentlemen.

The bilateral relationship between the United States and Sweden reach back to the days of the American Revolutionary War. The recognition in the "Treaty of Amity and Commerce" between Benjamin Franklin and the Swedish representative Gustaf Philip Creutz was the first recognition of the U.S. as a sovereign nation.

During the period 1820 to 1930 approximately 1.3 million Swedes, a third of the country's population, emigrated to North America. 200 years later and our ties are as strong as ever. Swedish affiliated companies directly support more than 333,000 jobs in all fifty states of the United States.

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It is an honour to be here at the John Hopkins University. Being invited as part of a long row of Statesmen from the US and the rest of the world makes me humble.

I will begin by saying a few words on last month's terrorist attack in Stockholm. A hijacked truck drove into pedestrians in central Stockholm. Five people died and 15 were injured. We have seen similar methods in Nice, in Berlin and in London.

I would like to reiterate what our prime minister Stefan Löfven said "Terrorists want us to be afraid, they want us to change our behaviour, they want us to not live our lives normally, but that is exactly what we are going to do."

Stockholm demonstrated its unity and determination just hours after the attack. Being here in Washington, I would like to thank the United States whom immediately offered support and condolences.

Our strong partnership is underpinned by a joint commitment to fundamental beliefs. We both believe that sustainable peace, development and prosperity are only possible when grounded upon respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

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My address on Sweden and Northern European Security will comprise a few main elements. First, Russia and the security challenges in our vicinity and beyond, second, what we are doing to counter this, and third, the Swedish view on the current world order as we see it.

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First, Russia.

The European security order is no longer in place as we know it because of Russia's aggressive behaviour.

The regime in Kremlin is closely knitted together with the security police, the oligarchs, the church and the state administration. The focus is to regain the "greatness of the Motherland" and once again become a world power.

Today, Russia occupies 20 % of Georgian territory since the war in 2008. Since 2014 Crimea is annexed by Russia. The Russian proxy war in Eastern Ukraine continues.

Let me be clear: this is against international law and is unacceptable. Beyond the wars against Georgia and Ukraine, we have seen Russia supporting the Assad regime in Syria, a nation that is conducting a horrific war against its own population.

This is the harsh reality.

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Russia has been upgrading its military capability for almost a decade. They are renewing 70% of all defence equipment. Our neighbours and partners in the vicinity of Russia feel the pressure. Russia is increasing military exercises and intelligence activities in the Baltic Sea. Russia exercises their nuclear capability. From time to time Russian officials also refer to nuclear weapons in their rhetoric.

In the Arctic, we see that Russia is increasing its military presence. With the reopening of former Soviet Arctic bases, come more activities in the Murmansk region, in the Kola region as well as in the Atlantic Ocean.

Moving to cyber space where one of the main challenges is attribution. The last years we have experienced a number of instances when possible state sponsored actors have engaged in systematic fabrications, deceptions and other harmful influences. These incidents have found its way in to our societies and democratic institutions.

I have seen my own signature on falsified documents concerning armaments deliveries to Ukraine. This false document circulated in the media all over the world.

The Russian military doctrine states that the 4th arena for warfare is the information and cyber arena. The strategy they are using is also combined with deception known as "Maskirovka". Russia trains its military extensively in this arena. Russia uses a combination of psychological warfare and military power in a hybrid combination, as we saw in the annexation of Crimea.

Russia uses disinformation and fabrications systematically. The U.S. and Europe must counter-target this more effectively and smarter. Policy makers have to be more deliberate when it comes to strategic communication against this type of attacks. We often fail to address Russia's activities for what it is.

When the USS Donald Cook was buzzed in the Baltic Sea by Russian fighter aircrafts, the U.S. published the videos online so people could decide for themselves what really happened. Immediately after the incident, I publicly stated that Russian behaviour towards the U.S. ship was irresponsible and dangerous. This is a good example of how we, with strategic communication, can counter Russian actions and disinformation.

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Sweden and the U.S. are fully committed to the world order as it was established after the Second World War. We adhere to the established international institutions of the United Nations, the European Union and NATO.

After the breakdown of the Soviet Union, many people in Europe and North America believed that that the world was moving towards the eternal peace.

Most of you have read Francis Fukuyama's "End of History and the Last Man"

in your political science class. Many believed that Fukuyama was right and that the ruled based world order and eternal peace was here to stay.

The idea that the eternal peace would last is an interesting idea, but appears less achievable as we look upon the world today. The rule-based world order is challenged by totalitarian regimes and fanatical chaos. And challenges far away are linked to challenges at home.

In the South China Sea, China dismisses international law and territorial integrity.

The refugee crisis is a challenge for Europe as the nations within EU member states is divided. Turkey is going in the wrong direction, with a President centralizing power and moving away from democracy. The populism in Europe is on the rise where extremist parties often have support from Russia.

Russia and China want to become dominating powers with spheres of interest. This is worrisome. Russia has acted against the 1975 Helsinki Accords and lack respect of all nations' right to decide their own destiny.

Problems are found in many regions. In Africa, Boko Haram and the terror group "MNLA" in Mali continue to spread fear. Daesh is pursuing with its terror acts in the Middle East and around the world. In East Asia, we see repeated missile tests from North Korea, where the tension is rising as North Korea continues to build its nuclear capability.

We have to meet all challenges together. The response has to be broad and involve stabilisation efforts. Sweden is committed to the Coalition to Counter ISIL, where we are working shoulder to shoulder with the US and other partners. The same goes for efforts in Afghanistan and Korea.

For Sweden, the UN is a cornerstone in world order. Sweden has an advanced ISR-unit with 250 troops at the UN mission in Mali. This UN mission has become the deadliest in its history.

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Sweden assumes responsibilities on the global scene. At the same time our first responsibility is our national security, directly linked to peace and stability in Northern Europe. We are not naïve nor have we taken our eyes off how Russia behaves in Europe or of the challenges beyond.

Swedish defence policy focuses on two parts: first, to upgrade national military

capability, and second, to deepen cooperation with other nations and organisation. This policy is based on a broad parliamentary support.

We are building a security network of defence cooperation. Sweden has a special and longstanding relationship to Finland, also a military non-aligned nation – where we plan for joint actions, if we so decide, in peace-time as well as crises and war. We work closely with the Nordic and Baltic countries as well as with UK, Poland and Germany. We cooperate within the framework of the EU and United Nations. We are privileged partners to NATO within the Enhanced Opportunities Program.

From 2015 there is a new trend in Swedish defence spending. The government has, for the first time in more than two decades, decided to successively increase the defence spending with 11% up to 2020.

Adding to this, the Swedish government decided to spend more money, beginning in the 2017 budget.

The key priority in the Defence Bill is to enhance the warfighting capability of the Armed Forces. This also includes the development of a "Total Defence Concept" which includes both military and civilian defence and a whole of society approach to security.

This year, the Swedish government decided to re-activate conscription. This is a signal to adversaries and to our partners that we are taking security seriously. Conscription for both women and men will start from the 1st of January next year.

A few examples of our other priorities:

We have re-established military presence on the island of Gotland which is located in the middle of the Baltic Sea. As U.S. four star General David Perkins said earlier this spring, when visiting the island, "Gotland is like unsinkable aircraft carrier, and it is good to be friend with its captain, Sweden".

Other priorities include increased training and exercises. International exercises are important in order to train together and develop interoperability. I also see these exercises as an important tool to send a message to potential adversaries.

In September this year, we will host a national exercise with contributions from the U.S. and European nations. The Aurora exercise, will be the largest Swedish military exercise in over 20 years, involving almost 20,000 military personnel and over 40 agencies.

The Navy will maintain surface combatants and upgrade two corvettes. Two next-generation submarines are under construction. Additional investments will be made in anti-submarine warfare capabilities.

On the Air defence side, we will keep investing in a new generation of Gripen fighters and arm them with air-to-air missile.

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Let me now turn to the role of the U.S.

The transatlantic link between Europe and the U.S. is critical. Our common challenges are greater and more complex than in decades. Regional powers are testing their strength against neighbours, other states, and international institutions.

A strong U.S. link to Europe is important for the stability in NATO and Europe. And it is only together with the US that European countries can balance the Russians. By acting together in international foras, operations and exercises, we make the threshold against aggression higher. One example is the economic sanctions against Russian.

We have to remember that the strategies of the Russian aggression, Chinese assertion or Daesh's use terror are to split us, to make us weaker and make us hesitate to act.

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One message that I would like to give you is that the U.S. together with European partners must continue to stand up for international law and the world order. We cannot be naive concerning Russian behaviour and strategy, nor can we close our eyes to other challenges around the world.

Sweden welcomes the U.S. and NATO's decisions to strengthen the security of its Eastern allies. The European Security Initiative and the Enhanced Forward Presence are crucial efforts to Baltic Sea Security and regional stability as a whole.

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Let me say a few words on the Swedish-US bilateral relation.

Sweden and the United States have a long-standing cooperation in the area of defence, last year consolidated through our Statement of Intent (SOI). It was signed by Secretary of Defence Carter and me. The SOI covers five broad areas: Interoperability, Training and Exercises, Armament Cooperation, Research and Development and Multinational Operations. We have taken important new steps both at the political and at the military level.

Since the signing, we have deepened our dialogue on the policy and military level. Focus for our discussion has been Northern Europe and how we can respond to challenges together. We have stepped up our training and exercise programs, in the air, at sea and on ground. All this, recognising that joint activities bolster our ability to operate together and send security political signals to friends and others.

In a few weeks our forces will join this years' largest multinational naval exercise in the Baltic Sea, called BALTOPS 17. In September, we are looking forward to a substantial U.S. participation in the Swedish exercise Aurora 2017.

The security situation in the Baltic Sea region and elsewhere gives us incentives to further enhance our cooperation and increase our preparedness.

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To my conclusions:

First, our common challenges with Russia and around the world remain for the coming years. Transatlantic cooperation is crucial for U.S. and European security.

Second, Sweden will assume its responsibility by contributing to security in the region and elsewhere. This is done by improving our national defence capability and by extending cooperation with other countries and organisations.

Third, as stated in our bilateral Statement of Intent: "Transatlantic and European unity is key. Global challenges can only be addressed if Europe and North America are acting together."

Against this background and the mutual interest we are now engaging with the United States as we did in the 18th century.

Thank you for listening. I am ready to take any of your questions.

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