Lugar Calls for Diplomatic Offensive on Ukraine

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Former Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Senator Richard G. Lugar today called for a broad "diplomatic offensive" to counter Russian aggression in Ukraine. "Crisis brings opportunity. The opportunity today is to expand the trans-Atlantic alliance," Lugar said.

"The trans-Atlantic alliance must come together to answer the call for support of friendly countries at Russia's border. To start, the United States and our allies should act decisively to expand NATO membership and prioritize resolution of so-called "frozen conflicts" that Russia has propagated for years. We also can extract an economic penalty for aggression through enhancing global trade in natural gas."

Lugar's comments came in a meeting with more than a dozen European ambassadors to the U.S. hosted by the Lugar Institute for Diplomacy and Congress at the German Marshall Fund of the United States.

Lugar has a long history of engagement with Ukraine, including:

* In 1992, he led a mission with former Senator Sam Nunn to help convince Ukrainian President Kravchuk to dismantle nuclear weapons, which subsequently occurred through the Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction Program.

* In 2004, at the start of the Orange Revolution, he undertook a mission to Ukraine to promote free elections.

* In 2005, he led a mission with then-Senator Barack Obama ahead of the first Russian gas cut-off. Subsequently, Lugar led the Congressional effort to expand diplomatic attention to energy in the region, including new pipelines. He introduced the first bill to allow U.S. liquefied natural gas (LNG) to European allies in November 2012.