Preamble

The US-Russian Elbe Group met in Reykjavik, Iceland from 27 to 29 March 2019. Our group of retired senior military and intelligence officials discussed a range of issues including strategic stability, cyber security, counter terrorism, the Middle East, questions related to nuclear security, the status of the Iran nuclear agreement, the future of nuclear nonproliferation, and Arctic issues.

The members of the Elbe Group agreed that as the two most powerful of nuclear states, our two countries bear a special responsibility to negotiate and abide by agreements that ensure strategic stability. We are especially concerned that nuclear weapons treaties are being ignored, eliminated, or are at risk of expiring.

Changes in the existing system of strategic stability have accelerated, further undermining our mutual sense of security. In addition, regional confrontation has increased; use of military forces has grown; nuclear capabilities are being modernized, and the development of military and dual use non-nuclear technologies is expanding.

There is no alternative to negotiation.

We agreed on specific recommendations to help improve US-Russian bilateral relations by increasing dialogue and channels of communication across the entire spectrum of national security establishments, including military, intelligence, diplomatic, and other relevant organizations.

The Elbe Group believes that our mutual interests are better served through cooperation than confrontation. Obstacles to joint cooperative efforts should be reduced or eliminated.

The Elbe Group is resolved to increase joint deconfliction and coordination efforts to operate in unified campaign to defeat radical Islamic terrorism and their ideologies.

The Elbe Group agrees that the United States and the Russian Federation should mutually agree not to interfere in the internal affairs of the other by cyber means or through information and influence operations.

The Elbe Group encourages the governments of the United States and the Russian Federation reschedule bilateral discussions on Strategic Stability and Cyber that have been cancelled in the past.

The Elbe Group believes that official arms control mechanisms should be preserved and strengthened to serve as a basis to address discuss concerns about new non-nuclear technologies in order to understand how they might adversely impact affecting the strategic balance.
We encourage a broadened dialogue on the future of US-Russian relations that considers new paradigms for updating mutual constraints on strategic systems, taking into account the emergence of new weapons and emerging technologies.

**Strategic stability**

There is no alternative to negotiation.

We recommend the governments of the United States and the Russian Federation issue directive instructions to resume contacts and interaction between the national security and military establishments.

**Stability in the Baltic and Black Sea region**

NATO-Russia relations are an element of strategic stability. The Elbe Group proposes to significantly reduce the activity of operational and combat training of the armed forces of NATO and Russia in the close proximity of the border between Russia and the NATO countries.

Resume the practice of the parties to invite military observers to maneuvers and exercises of the armed forces of NATO and Russia.

The NATO-Russia Council should prioritize discussions on risk reduction and military transparency in the Baltic and Black Sea regions, where an accident could escalate the situation, with unintended dangerous consequences.

Heightened transparency could be achieved by providing reciprocal briefings on military exercises and troop deployments.

Improved NATO-Russia relations should include regular military-military contacts to include staff-staff contacts and the return of the Russian liaison cell to SHAPE headquarters in Mons, Belgium.

**INF**

Consider the possibility of preserving the fundamental provisions of the INF Treaty for the future.

**START-3**

Consider the possibility of the immediate start of negotiations on the extension of the Russian-American START-3 treaty. The lack of agreement on such an important issue as the reduction of strategic offensive weapons can have a negative impact on the future of the non-proliferation regime.
At the same time the Russian party proposes to take into account that any further steps towards nuclear disarmament should be considered and carried out with strict observance of the principle of equal and indivisible security bringing to bear a range of all factors capable of keeping strategic stability at a sufficient level.

**Cyber**

Recognizing the increasing economic, social, and political importance of the Internet, the Elbe Group recommends mutual cessation of hostile use of the Internet in the social and political spheres and encourages joint discussions and cooperation on combating cyber criminals and use of the Internet by Islamic extremists. There should be joint examination of software weaknesses exploited by criminals and shareware cryptography used in terrorist communications.

**Countering terrorism in Syria, Near and Middle East**

Focus on to create a broad international antiterrorist coalition in the entire Middle East region.

In this connection, we call to attention the ongoing US-Russian efforts to deconflict operations against ISIS in Syria as a basis for broader efforts to combat terrorism.

In order to prevent the revival of ISIS, the military-to-military and special services’ cooperation between our countries should be resumed, both at the planning stages (preventive measures) and at the stages of direct implementation of the decisions taken.

In order to prevent a humanitarian catastrophe in the region, and above all in Syria, the Russian side proposes to the U.S. side to resume its participation in international efforts to resolve the Syrian conflict.

Stability in Afghanistan is in our mutual interest. The Elbe Group supports efforts to bring stability to Afghanistan and help reduce the threat of terrorism from the Afghanistan-Pakistan region.

The Elbe Group supports US-Russian efforts to cooperate against terrorist groups to raise funds, recruit new members, and carry out terrorist activity around the globe.

We encourage US-Russian efforts to share information and work cooperatively carrying out the “duty to warn” about impending terrorist attacks.

**On the Arctic**
To save and to take the necessary measures to develop agreements reached within the framework of the Arctic Council.

To resume the practice of working meetings to discuss cooperation in the Arctic zone between the Chief of the General Staff of the Russian Armed Forces and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the US Armed Forces, including maintaining interaction in the Arctic zone between representatives of the Coast Guards of Russia and the United States.

The Elbe dialogue

The parties are convinced that the search for mutual interests, an understanding of intentions and actions of the two countries are key components in contemporary relations between Russia and the United States.

That is why the Elbe Group intends to promote in myriad ways the expansion of the dialogue between the various structures of civil society, academia and business circles, the expert community, and various power structures, including the expansion of dialogue in inter Congressional/Parliamentary relations.