

**July 23, 1940**

**Welles Declaration, Department of State Press  
Release, 'Statement by the Acting Secretary of  
State, the Honorable Sumner Welles'**

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**Summary:**

Later referred to as the "Welles Declaration," this statement by acting Secretary of State Sumner Welles condemned the 1940 Soviet occupation of the Baltic states and set United States policy of refusing to recognize the new Soviet governments of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.

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**Contents:**

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## DEPARTMENT OF STATE

FOR THE PRESS

July 23, 1940

STATEMENT BY THE ACTING SECRETARY OF STATE,  
THE HONORABLE SURBNER WELLES

During these past few days the devious processes whereunder the political independence and territorial integrity of the three small Baltic republics—Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania—were to be deliberately annihilated by one of their more powerful neighbors, have been rapidly drawing to their conclusion.

From the day when the peoples of these republics first gained their independent and democratic form of government the people of the United States have watched their admirable progress in self-government with deep and sympathetic interest.

The policy of this Government is universally known. The people of the United States are opposed to predatory activities no matter whether they are carried on by the use of force or by the threat of force. They are likewise opposed to any form of intervention on the part of one state, however powerful, in the domestic concerns of any other sovereign state, however weak.

These principles constitute the very foundations upon which the existing relationship between the twenty-one sovereign republics of the New World rests.

The United States will continue to stand by these principles, because of the conviction of the American people that unless the doctrine in which these principles are inherent once again governs the relations between nations, the rule of reason, of justice and of law—in other words the basis of modern civilization itself—cannot be preserved.

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