

Statement by Ambassador Douglas Lute
Before the United States Senate Foreign Relations Committee
Sub-committee on Europe and Regional Security Cooperation
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Madam Chair, Ranking Member:

It is my pleasure to discuss with you and the committee NATO as its 75th anniversary approaches. I will address three main points: NATO's contributions, the most significant challenge it now faces, and its importance to America in the future.

NATO is the most successful, most durable collective defense alliance in world history. The NATO Summit in Washington in July will be a fitting opportunity to remember and acknowledge NATO's contributions over the past 75 years. One might divide those years into three phases, perhaps labeled NATO 1.0, 2.0 and 3.0. In NATO 1.0 for 40 years from its origin in 1949 in the wake of World War II through 1989, NATO stood as the defensive bulwark in Europe against the Soviet Union. This defense provided the time and space America's European allies needed to recover from the war, solidify their democracies, become prosperous again, and eventually integrate to form the European Union, America's largest trading partner.

The world experienced an historic pivot point with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the reunification of Germany a year later and the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. Over the next 25 years, this post-Cold War period, or NATO 2.0, saw NATO adapt to new challenges not foreseen in 1949. NATO welcomed as members newly free countries of the former Warsaw Pact and even former republics of the USSR which, when given the opportunity, chose to become democracies and NATO allies. Beyond new members, NATO established partnerships with dozens of states under the principle that NATO is more secure when its neighbors are more stable. NATO intervened in the Balkans, first in Bosnia then later in Kosovo, to stop conflicts and promote stability. Most significant for the United States, NATO immediately stood by our side when we were attacked on 9/11, invoking for the only time in history Article 5 of the treaty, fulfilling the pledge that an attack on one is an attack on all. For the next 20 years, NATO stood with the United States in Afghanistan.

NATO 3.0 began with the Russian aggression against Ukraine in 2014, the illegal annexation of Crimea and destabilization of the Donbas. Certainly by Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, the world again experienced a strategic inflection point. For the first time since the Second World War, large scale conventional war in Europe threatened the existence of a nation state. If 2014 was the overture, 2022 was the main event. We are still in the early years after this eruption in the international system and we should expect aftershocks — political, economic and security — to reverberate for years to come. It is already clear that Russia's blatant aggression and disregard for every international rule of the road since the United Nations charter is the most significant challenge NATO and the free world face today.

In six months, NATO leaders will convene in Washington to celebrate 75 years since the treaty was signed in Washington in 1949. More important than celebrating, however, these leaders will confront the most severe threat to the world NATO has kept guard over for almost eight decades — the war in Ukraine. Every NATO summit strives to demonstrate the cohesion and unity of the Alliance. I expect we will discuss today a range of issues that challenge that cohesion: adding Sweden as NATO's 32nd member, fulfilling requirements for NATO's new regional defense plans, allies' progress toward meeting resource commitments, even selecting the next secretary general. I am confident allies will find their way through

these issues, perhaps even before the Summit in July. Most important, however, will be what the Washington Summit decides to do about Ukraine.

There are two ways to think about NATO's relationship to Ukraine — what is the minimum necessary and what is the best possible. In my view, NATO members must provide Ukraine with the military, economic and political support to the war. This commitment requires discarding the incremental support over the past two years, shifting to a concept of “as long as it takes, with as much as it takes, when it is needed.” So far, the United States-led coalition has provided Ukraine enough military support not to lose, but not enough for Ukraine to win. A stalemate on the ground in Ukraine plays to Russia's long-war attrition strategy. Moving toward best possible, I believe that along with increased support to Ukraine, NATO should provide at the Washington Summit a concrete step that demonstrates that Ukraine will be a member of the Alliance. I submit for the record a [recent publication](#) by the Atlantic Council that offers a creative move toward membership that would not only reassure the Ukrainian people that they will eventually be secure within NATO, but also signal to President Putin that his strategy to subjugate Ukraine will fail. These measures in support of Ukraine represent the most significant deliverables for the Washington Summit.

As the Summit approaches, this committee has asked for suggestions on how to support Ukraine's fight for survival. I offer three:

- Most urgent, Congress must pass additional funding for military support. This is not charity but a direct investment in NATO and American security. As we know, most of this money is spent in the United States, but the effects are in Ukraine. Complementing this funding would be expanding authorities for the Administration to approve the transfer of American-provided military capabilities from allies and partners to Ukraine.
- The SFRC approved last week the REPO Act to transfer seized Russian assets to support Ukraine. Passing this measure into law would be a clear message to our allies and partners and to the Kremlin that Russian aggression will not stand.
- Prioritizing the expansion and enforcement of economic sanctions against Russian is vitally important to demonstrate to the Kremlin that its long-war attrition strategy cannot succeed. In particular, we should crack down on re-flagging of Russian oil exports that evade sanctions.

In closing, as NATO approaches its 75th anniversary, polling shows strong, bipartisan and enduring American public support for the Alliance. Americans understand the value of NATO — when confronting challenges beyond our borders America's greatest advantage is our network of alliances, beginning with NATO. Today as we confront Russian aggression and in the decades to come as we compete with China, America has a geo-strategic advantage that neither can match — our allies, friends and partners. The United States must preserve and cherish this strategic asset and the Washington Summit in July is an opportunity to do so.

Thank you. I look forward to your questions.