

**Senate Committee On Foreign Relations**  
**Chairman Senator Richard G. Lugar**  
**Opening Statement for Hearing On Nominations**  
**June 21, 2004**

Today, the Foreign Relations Committee meets to consider two important diplomatic nominations. We are pleased to welcome Mr. Douglas McElhaney, who is nominated to be Ambassador to Bosnia and Herzegovina; and Dr. Aldona Wos, who is nominated to be Ambassador to Estonia.

Douglas McElhaney is an accomplished Foreign Service Officer who has spent much of his career working in Europe. He is currently serving as Consul General at the U.S. Consulate in Milan, Italy. Prior to his present assignment, he served as the Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S. Embassy in Paris and as Deputy Chief of Mission to NATO in Brussels.

If confirmed, the nominee would assume his post at a critical time in the Balkans. Since the signing of the Dayton Peace Accords in 1995, tremendous progress has been made in rebuilding the war torn region. Assistance from the United States and the international community has reduced inter-ethnic violence, restored freedom of movement, facilitated the return of many refugees, and started the process of developing democratic institutions. This progress has not come easily. Virtually every initiative has required some level of intervention by representatives of the international community.

Bosnia remains one of the poorest countries in Europe. Economic progress is a difficult challenge, given the severe infrastructure damage suffered during the war. Many of Bosnia's pre-war industries have failed to recover, and international investment has not materialized. As a result, now is not the time to be considering reductions in assistance to the region. We must maintain our commitment to the Balkans to prevent any slippage toward violence and anarchy.

At the NATO Summit in Istanbul in the coming weeks, the Alliance will discuss the future of the Stabilization Force (SFOR) mission in Bosnia. Among likely topics of discussion is the potential replacement of the SFOR mission by a European Union based force. I am pleased that our European allies are prepared to take over this important mission and remain hopeful that NATO will maintain a presence within the new security framework. NATO should continue to play a critical role in efforts to combat terrorism and capture those wanted for war crimes.

Dr. Aldona Wos is a retired physician and a gifted leader. In addition to an impressive medical career, she has provided years of service to the United Way, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, and other charities. If confirmed as Ambassador to Estonia, I am confident that she will bring outstanding leadership skills and initiative to our Embassy in Tallinn.

The United States and Estonia have shared a strong bond since its independence in 1992. The United States spearheaded the invitation to Estonia and its Baltic neighbors to join NATO. The Senate voted unanimously to approve Estonia's membership in the Alliance. Even before its official entrance into NATO, Estonia had proven its commitment to peace and security through its participation in NATO operations in the Balkans and Afghanistan and through its contributions to Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Estonia is a model for its former Soviet and Warsaw Pact neighbors. It enjoys one of the most dynamic economies in Europe, and reports indicate that it is running a budget surplus. Aggressive market-based reforms have created an exciting environment for international investment. Just last month, Estonia's hard work was rewarded with membership in the European Union.

Dr. Wos will have to navigate the difficult circumstances surrounding Estonia's relations with Russia. The two countries have not yet signed a border treaty, and Russia continues to claim that Estonia is discriminating against its Russian-speaking minority, which makes up 29 percent of the population. In addition, Russia has expressed irritation at NATO's new role in defending the airspace of Estonia and the other two Baltic states.

We are pleased that these two gifted nominees have agreed to apply their substantial abilities to the challenge of representing their country as ambassadors, and we look forward to working closely with them in the future.

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