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Opening Statement for Hearing on NATO

U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee Ranking Member Dick Lugar made the following statement at today's hearing:

I thank the Chairman for this opportunity to continue our examination of the future of the NATO Alliance. I join in welcoming Secretary Albright and our other distinguished witnesses.

For decades, discussions of NATO frequently have begun with the premise that the Alliance is at a crossroads or even in crisis. When evaluating NATO, I start from the presumption that after 60 years, it is still a work in progress. If one takes this long term view, current alliance deficiencies – though serious -- do not seem insurmountable. It is important to take stock of just how remarkable it is that NATO has enlarged from 12 to 28 countries and is now involved in combat three thousand miles from Europe. NATO possesses enormous geopolitical assets and a history of achievement that, with the proper leadership, can undergird success in the future.

The paramount question facing NATO today is how to strengthen the credibility of Article Five. Recent developments have eroded some of NATO's deterrence value. This erosion has occurred as Members of the Alliance have expressed less enthusiasm for NATO expansion and found an increasing number of reasons to avoid committing forces to Afghanistan. The decline in the deterrent value of Article Five became more apparent with the onset of a string of energy crises in Europe and the adoption by several West European governments of "beggar-thy-neighbor" policies with respect to oil and natural gas arrangements with the Russian Federation.

The Obama Administration's decision to alter missile defense plans also has implications for Alliance confidence in Article Five. Iranian missiles never constituted the primary rationale for Polish and Czech decisions to buy into the Bush Administration's plan. Rather, it was the waning confidence in NATO, and Article Five in particular, that lent missile defense political credibility in those countries. The United States must be sensitive to events that have transpired in the broader European security environment since the Bush plan was proposed and negotiated. Our commitment to NATO remains the most important vehicle for projecting stability throughout Europe and even into regions of Asia and the Middle East. It is critical that we re-establish the credibility of these assurances.

An invigoration of NATO military exercises in Eastern Europe and joint planning for contingencies would be a first step. The Administration also must raise the profile of U.S. political and economic cooperation with Eastern Europe, and intensify military contacts with selected countries. The political and military reforms undertaken by NATO aspirants -- to a large extent self-driven and self-funded -- have been not only an important element of European stability during the last two decades, but also a foreign policy bargain for U.S. and alliance taxpayers. We must continue to hold out the prospect of membership to qualified nations, including Ukraine, Georgia, and the entire Balkan region.

We also must articulate a vision for NATO that both prepares for any potential threat from traditional rivals and develops new capabilities in meeting unconventional threats such as terrorism, drug trafficking, cyber warfare, WMD proliferation, and energy manipulation. The long term success of the alliance may turn on how it deals with such threats. One particular gap in the last Strategic Concept,

exposed by a series of crises and myopic responses, was its failure to incorporate energy security into NATO's mission.

At the 2006 Riga Summit, I encouraged the Alliance to make energy security an Article Five commitment in which any member experiencing a deliberate energy disruption would receive assistance from other Alliance members. We should recognize that an energy cutoff to an ally in the middle of winter could cause death and economic calamity on the same scale as a military attack. The Atlantic Community must establish a credible and unified energy strategy.

I have been encouraged that NATO has shown progress in making energy security part of its operational duties, including strategic planning, infrastructure protection, and intelligence analysis. This July, I witnessed firsthand how seemingly parochial interests can be surmounted for the common cause of energy cooperation. I was asked to represent the United States, along with our Envoy for Energy Security, Ambassador Richard Morningstar, in Ankara for the signing of a landmark agreement among 12 countries and the European Union to move forward on the Nabucco gas pipeline, a breakthrough that had only dim prospects one year ago.

Though some allies have called for geopolitical retrenchment in response to perceptions that Article Five guarantees have declined in value, I believe the proper response is to strengthen those guarantees and find creative ways to address the more nuanced threats that we face today. A new Strategic Concept simultaneously must reaffirm the fundamental value of NATO and reinforce those principles that led to its creation. I look forward to our discussion.

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