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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 join the Chairman in welcoming our distinguished witness. We look forward to hearing the details of the report on the future of NATO issued on Monday by Secretary Albright and the Group of Experts. This report will serve as a key contribution to ongoing discussions on the new NATO Strategic Concept that will be adopted this fall by NATO Heads of State.

In particular, I am hopeful that today's hearing can contribute to deliberations on several questions about the direction of NATO's defense plans.

First, before we can chart a course forward, the Alliance must ask what the NATO strategic review is intended to achieve. In response to the new threat environment that has emerged since the previous Strategic Concept, written in 1999, the Alliance has fielded more than 100,000 troops and 27 Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan and has undertaken new missions in the realm of energy security, cyber defense, anti-piracy, and WMD interdiction. In other words, the Alliance's conceptual thinking has already evolved significantly. The new NATO Strategic Concept should not only solidify this evolution, it should create momentum for addressing national deficiencies with regard to public opinion, defense reform execution, and budgeting, which remain the most difficult obstacles to alliance success.

Second, what role should nuclear weapons play in NATO's strategic posture? While some allies have made unprecedented calls for the withdrawal of U.S. tactical nuclear weapons from Europe, the planned sharing of these weapons on allied aircraft still is a key element of NATO defense plans. The new Strategic Concept must consider the consequences that altered nuclear planning would have on the security of Eastern European states. It also must consider how NATO's nuclear planning will affect proliferation decisions of allies, especially those proximate to Iran, such as Turkey.

Third, how can we strengthen conventional Article Five deterrence? Following the 2008 Russia-Georgia war, many have rightly called for measures to reassure Eastern European allies. The reality is that most allies view the presence of U.S. troops and hardware as the ultimate guarantor of their security. Failing an Alliance consensus on the role new allies may play in hosting NATO infrastructure, the implementation of reassurance measures, including missile defense plans, infrastructure upgrades, and troop deployments, will continue to be hampered.

Fourth, what constitutes an attack under Article Five in today's strategic environment? The decline in the deterrent value of Article Five became most 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. When I speak with leaders from Eastern European countries, they are especially concerned with the threats posed by cyber war, energy cutoffs, and hazardous materials. Since 2006, I have advocated that energy security be incorporated into Article Five, and I continue to believe that the Alliance must undertake planning to establish a credible deterrent against emerging unconventional threats.

I thank the Chairman for holding this hearing, and I look forward to discussion of these matters.

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