

Committee Statement of Senator Lugar

NATO and the war

Tuesday, April 1, 2003

Following is the statement by Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Dick Lugar at today's hearing on NATO enlargement and the role of NATO in the war on terror and in the future of Iraq.

We are fortunate to have an especially distinguished set of witnesses with us today. I am pleased to welcome Ambassador Nicholas Burns, the U.S. Permanent Representative to NATO; Bruce Jackson, President of the Project on Transitional Democracies; and Ronald Asmus, Senior Fellow at the German Marshall Fund. Mr. Ambassador, given the heightened responsibility required of you and your staff in Brussels during the ongoing campaign in Iraq, we especially appreciate your willingness to come before us today. As our thoughts and prayers continue to be with our troops in Iraq, we in Congress must examine the broader context of the fight against terror and weapons of mass destruction. The subject that we take up today is important to our men and women in the military and to the well being of our country. The Atlantic Alliance is a key component of the fight against terrorism, and we must attempt to maximize the utility of NATO in prosecuting that war.

This hearing will examine the future of the Atlantic Alliance, plans for NATO enlargement, and how we can work with our European allies to establish greater security in an era of global terrorism. The debate over Iraq exposed a division within NATO over the best methods to combat terrorism and weapons of mass destruction. This has strained some of our traditional alliances, but it has not broken them. The United States has more at stake and more in common with Europe than with any other part of the world. These common interests and shared values will sustain the Alliance if governments realize the incredible resource that NATO represents. When President Bush made his first trip to Europe in June of 2001, he articulated his vision of a united Europe at peace, and he threw his full weight behind NATO enlargement, from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea. As the leader of NATO, we have no intention of shirking our commitment to Europe. Fifty years ago, NATO's founders made a political decision that the United States and Europe needed a common strategy to meet common threats. That need has not dissipated. As President Bush told the German parliament last year, "NATO's defining purpose -- our collective defense -- is as urgent as ever. America and Europe need each other to fight and win the war against global terror."

At the Washington Summit in 1999, NATO heads of state declared that they wanted the Alliance to be as relevant to the threats of the next fifty years as it was to the threats of the past fifty. Part of their vision was realized that day, when NATO officially welcomed Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic into the Alliance. At that moment, NATO was engaged in a successful military campaign in Kosovo, which demonstrated that the Alliance could operate in a complex combat situation. Two years later -- less than 24 hours after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001-- NATO invoked Article 5 for the first time in its history. This Article declares that an attack on one member is an attack on

all. The United States remains grateful for that swift and unquestioning expression of solidarity.

But the September 11th attacks and the ensuing war on terrorism have led to a debate on NATO's post-Cold War role that has forced heads of state to reevaluate NATO's mission in the 21st century. When NATO was founded in 1949, its purpose was to defend Western democracies against the Soviet Union. But the demise of the Soviet Union diminished the significance of NATO's mission. We began to debate where NATO should go and what NATO should do. In early 1993, I delivered a speech calling for NATO not only to enlarge, but also to prepare to go "out of area." At that time, many people were skeptical about enlarging NATO's size and mission. Those of us who believed in NATO enlargement prevailed in the debate. I believe that events have proven us right. But NATO requires constant maintenance and adjustment. No one should expect an effortless Atlantic Alliance, devoid of disagreement.

This is the second of four hearings that the Foreign Relations Committee will hold on NATO. The immediate goal of these hearings is to determine which of the seven candidate countries should be invited into the Alliance. As we consider this new enlargement, it is clear that the last round has been highly beneficial. Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic are among the most dynamic countries in Europe. They are deeply interested in Alliance matters, and they have sought to maximize their contribution to collective security. The prospect of NATO membership gave these countries the incentive to accelerate reforms, settle disputes, and cooperate with their neighbors. Their success, in turn, has been a strong incentive for democratization and peace among Europe's other aspiring countries.

I believe that the candidate countries – Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Slovenia, Slovakia, Romania, and Bulgaria -- are ready to assume full membership responsibilities and contribute to European stability and security. I am fully confident that these countries have made an enduring commitment to the core values of NATO and that they will stand with those most committed to the Transatlantic relationship. The candidates have worked hard to improve their military capabilities. They have taken steps ranging from developing a peace-keeping capacity to acquiring the equipment and skills necessary for high-intensity conflict. All seven have been supportive of Coalition military efforts in Iraq. I will urge the Senate to vote in favor of bringing the seven candidate nations into NATO.

As we consider new members, we must simultaneously reconsider NATO's purposes. In my view, the major security challenge we face today is the intersection of terrorism with weapons of mass destruction. NATO enlargement should be pursued as part of a broader strategic dialogue aimed at establishing common Transatlantic approaches to meet this challenge around the globe.

Although NATO's mission no longer centers on Russia, the debate over NATO enlargement must include a discussion of Russia. Since September 11, 2001, Russian opposition to NATO enlargement -- particularly Baltic membership -- has eased. The Russians have recognized that enlargement is not directed against them. Stabilizing democracy in Eastern Europe does not threaten democracy in Russia – in fact, a stable and peaceful Europe will benefit the entire continent, including Russia. I fully supported the establishment of the NATO-Russia Council at the Rome Summit last spring, which opened a new cooperative chapter in NATO-Russia relations.

NATO is a remarkable institution bound by military strength and a common vision. But NATO will be reduced to a housekeeping role in Europe if it does not tackle the most pressing security threat to our countries today. We must compliment NATO expansion with a plan to transform the Alliance into an important force in the war on terrorism. Ambassador Burns, Mr. Jackson, and Dr. Asmus, we look forward to your insights on these issues.