

(prepared for delivery)

**Statement of Madeleine K. Albright
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
Hearing on NATO: A Strategic Concept for Transatlantic Security
October 22, 2009**

Good morning Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, and thank you for the opportunity to be here.

I want to begin by complimenting you, Mr. Chairman, and Senator Lugar, for the outstanding work you are doing with this committee and also for holding this hearing.

NATO is, above all, an alliance of democracies; public discussion is a key attribute of democracy; and a discussion about NATO's present and future could not be more timely.

Although I speak this morning only for myself, I am honored to serve as chair of the recently-appointed Group of Experts, which will offer advice to NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen on a new strategic concept for the alliance.

Last week, in Luxembourg, our group participated in the first of four planned seminars, as part of a broader process to collect a diversity of views about NATO strategy and operations. To this end, we listened to a number of distinguished scholars and former officials. We also met with NATO's military leaders.

We plan to provide our conclusions and recommendations to the Secretary General by next May. In close consultation with member governments, the Secretary General will then draft the strategic concept for consideration at the Lisbon Summit toward the end of the year. When approved, the document will serve as a guide for the alliance through the coming decade.

Mr. Chairman, I think you would agree that the stakes involved in this strategic review are high. For sixty years, NATO has been the world's preeminent multinational security institution, and like many of you – or at least the more senior members --I grew up with the alliance.

In fact, NATO's birth was hastened by the Communist takeover, in 1948, of my native Czechoslovakia. From then until the fall of the Berlin Wall, NATO defended freedom in the West while preserving hope in Europe's east; as a daughter of Prague living in America, I had one foot on each side of that divide.

Since the end of the Cold War, the alliance has remained open to qualified new members; it has responded to threats both in and outside the North Atlantic region; and it has begun working with others to counter global threats, including proliferation and terrorism.

Despite this, there are some who have raised doubts about NATO's ongoing relevance. So let me address that question directly: does NATO still matter or is it as obsolete as a Senate spittoon?

The answer is clear. NATO was created in response to the Soviet threat but not only for that purpose. It was also designed to prevent a repetition of Europe's past, in which the capitals of the continent took up arms against one another. NATO was intended to ensure that the many national rivalries that had torn Europe apart would finally be reined in so that a larger, peaceful and democratic whole could be created. This worthy goal did not disappear with the Soviet Union, and it has not grown less urgent with the passage of time. A peaceful Europe and a democratic trans-Atlantic community are among the valuable assets and accomplishments of modern civilization. NATO helped bring them into being and continues to preserve them. The time and treasure we invest in the alliance toward that end alone would be well worth the price.

This fact is highlighted by France's recent decision to participate fully in NATO's integrated military structure, hardly a sign that the alliance is diminishing in function or stature. The French move shows that country's political commitment to the alliance and enhances prospects for even closer cooperation between NATO and the European Union (EU). This could help the organization to maintain its trans-Atlantic balance by increasing participation on the European side; and it validates the conviction that I had when in office, which is that NATO and European defense capabilities should be seen as mutually reinforcing. As General Jim Jones recently pointed out, a strong and independent Europe is good for a strong and independent alliance.

Of course, NATO does more than maintain the unity of its members. It also provides for their collective defense. A critic might scoff and ask what exactly that term means in the world today, but that question can be answered. Yes, international borders are vulnerable to dangers that are less obvious and tangible than foreign armies, but that does not mean that traditional forms of aggression are necessarily a thing of the past. Since the end of the Cold War, the world has witnessed numerous attempts to change national borders through the use of force – in the Middle East, the Horn of Africa, the Balkans, the Caucasus, and even in South America.

Under Article Four of the North Atlantic Treaty, the allies “will consult together whenever, in the opinion of any of them, the territorial integrity, political independence or security of any of the parties are threatened.” Under Article Five, the allies agree that “an armed attack against one...shall be considered an attack against them all.”

These provisions were agreed upon to protect the security of every ally against external threats. Making good on that commitment – in deeds, not just in words-- remains the heart of NATO's purpose.

Fulfilling that purpose, however, is a more varied task now than it was. Time and technology have brought many benefits to the world, but also new dangers,

including weapons of mass destruction, missiles, cyber-sabotage, and violent extremism. Not even NATO allows us to predict all threats; but NATO does give us a predictable military and political framework for responding to even the most surprising perils. In this sense, NATO is as relevant to the security of its members as a fire department is to the well-being of a community.

Most prominent among present dangers is that posed by Al Qaeda and its allies. Their attacks have been felt in many countries but if there is a center to the struggle, it is in Afghanistan, spilling over into Pakistan's western frontier. NATO's mission is to promote stability by helping Afghanistan's security forces to protect local populations from the Taliban. This effort has contributed to a stronger and more professional Afghan Army, but the mission has also suffered from divisions within the alliance and from the lack of a more effective government in Kabul.

Thanks to your discussions this past week, Mr. Chairman, the democratic process in Afghanistan has been strengthened. The Afghan people should know that the United States and NATO are committed to helping them to exercise their rights fully, fairly and safely. Yesterday, the National Democratic Institute listed some useful steps that should be taken between now and November 7, including an effort by NATO and Afghan security forces to expand the area where voters can feel protected.

I expect that the runoff election and issues related to it will be among the factors taken into account by President Obama as he continues to review U.S. strategy in Afghanistan. The opinions of our allies will be another vital factor. Based on my own discussions, I can say that NATO members agree on the right goals in Afghanistan; our challenge now is to come together on behalf of the optimum means. Accordingly, it is essential that NATO members focus, not on past differences, but on how best to contribute to future success. As Secretary General Rasmussen recently declared: "NATO's operation in Afghanistan is not America's responsibility or burden alone; it is and it will remain a team effort."

Mr. Chairman, NATO's current missions in Afghanistan and off the coast of West Africa (to counter piracy) have cast new light on an old debate concerning the proper scope of NATO activities. Although a consensus exists that missions conducted outside the Transatlantic region are sometimes necessary to protect populations within the alliance, there are no formally-established criteria for separating appropriate missions from those that are not.

Some suggest that these external missions have opened a fault line within the alliance, placing on one side those who believe that NATO should assume the role of global police and on the other those who insist that NATO stay close to home. I see no such fault line but instead a sensible search for a reasonable balance. There are limits to what NATO can do and also to what it should attempt; it is a regionally-based security alliance and cannot be all things to all people. Article V and collective defense remain, properly, the cornerstone of our alliance. However, we must also be prepared to respond in a selective way to threats that arise beyond alliance territory, taking into account the urgency of those threats, the availability of other security options, and the likely consequences of acting or of failing to act.

To our benefit, NATO is both a leader and a partner. The alliance is linked to a broader network that is addressing problems of peace, justice, development and humanitarian response. Accordingly, we should draw a distinction between what NATO must do and what others can do – and between situations where the alliance must act on its own and where a team approach is preferable. NATO's new strategic concept should recognize that the work of the alliance will often rely on a comprehensive approach, involving cooperation with such organizations as the UN in all its aspects, the EU, the OSCE, the African Union, other regional entities, and major NGOs.

It is vital that NATO be able to work with others; it is also essential that NATO be understood by others. The story of the alliance is a proud one, even glorious, but it has grown more complex as new chapters have been written. Each year, across the globe, there are fewer people who recall NATO's creation, fewer who remember its Cold War resolve, and fewer who have a clear sense of why NATO's survival and success should matter to them. So as we think about NATO's strategic concept, we should bear in mind how such a document will be read not only within the Euro-Atlantic community but by people in every region. The alliance must strive to explain its policies and actions persuasively and in real time, making full use of modern information technology.

Communication is, however, a two-way street, requiring both an effort to explain and a willingness to listen. When I was secretary of state, I spent many hours discussing NATO's activities and plans with my counterparts from Russia. Our talks were typically cordial but blunt. No matter how often I reassured my Russian friends about the alliance's intentions, their suspicions remained. To them, NATO's very existence served as an unwelcome reminder of the Cold War. From what I have been able to observe in the past decade, this mindset has not changed. This makes dialogue more difficult, but it does not make cooperation impossible.

Russia and NATO have important interests in common. These include support for stability in Central Asia, countering terrorism and piracy, and curbing the spread of weapons of mass destruction.

Despite these shared interests, there are some in Moscow who would like Washington to choose between loyalty to our NATO allies and cooperation with Russia – as if these two options were mutually exclusive. In fact, the United States can fully meet its obligations to allies without harming the legitimate interests of Russia. At the same time, we can seek the cooperation of the Kremlin on issues related to international stability without diluting our commitments within NATO. In fact, the United States can and should combine strategic reassurance for allies and realistic engagement with Moscow.

When I was secretary of state, our policy was that, on matters of European security, Russia was entitled to a voice but not a veto; both halves of that equation remain valid. In the interests of clarity, certain facts bear repeating:

First, NATO's purposes are defensive in nature. The resources of the alliance are not directed at any country, and the organization does not consider any country to be its enemy.

Second, the alliance neither asserts, nor recognizes, a sphere of influence. On the contrary, NATO is a defender of the rights of nations to exercise sovereignty legitimately and independently within their borders.

Third, NATO governments remain open to a cooperative relationship with Russia, including regular consultations and, when possible, joint actions. Such a relationship can only mature, however, if Russia demonstrates a genuine willingness to engage with NATO in a constructive fashion.

Fourth, when I was in government, I told Central European leaders that the United States would have no important diplomatic discussions about them without them. That policy, too, should remain our guide.

Finally, we should re-iterate that, whether or not Moscow approves, NATO's doors will remain open to qualified candidates. Decisions about membership are for the alliance alone to make. Those decisions should be made on the basis of objective criteria related to the contributions and obligations the admission of a new member entails. No country outside the alliance should be permitted to exert influence over these internal judgments. At the same time, NATO membership must not be used to prove a political point about the alliance's willingness to stand up to external pressure. NATO membership is not a status symbol or a bargaining chip; it is an agreement between old members and prospective new ones to make the alliance stronger and more effective for purposes that all can support.

As NATO leaders draft a new strategic concept, they will also need to consider political and military reforms to ensure that the commitments made at next year's Lisbon Summit can be implemented. Such reforms will be critical in light of the limited financial and human resources that are likely to be available to the alliance in coming years. At this early stage in the work of the Group of Experts, it would be premature to pronounce on the specific reforms and implementation plans that should be considered. There can be no doubt, however, that there is room to improve the efficiency of NATO decision-making and the effectiveness of alliance expenditures.

Mr. Chairman, during the Cold War, NATO's main objective was to defend freedom from the threat of aggression by the Communist Bloc. Today, we understand that neither the defeat of Communism nor our own freedom is sufficient to guarantee security. NATO must strive for a world in which differences are resolved without violence; where people are allowed to live without fear of aggression or attack; and in which the rule of law is legitimately-constituted, broadly-recognized and widely-enforced.

By its nature, this is an enterprise to be waged on many fronts, simultaneously and continuously. It will lead not to some climactic or universal triumph, but to the hope that our children can grow up in a world more peaceful,

free, and humane than it has been. For that to happen, NATO must operate in the future with all the energy and focus it has shown in the past – and each member of the alliance must meet its obligations fully and without fail.

Looking back, we can see that many of the threats we faced have vanished or shifted in shape; looking ahead, we can expect that many of the problems we worry about today will also wax or wane. Global and regional dangers must naturally command NATO's attention, but these impermanent perils must never define our alliance.

In 1949, the founders of NATO came together not because they were afraid, but because of their faith in the values of democracy, free expression, and respect for the dignity of every human being. We have learned since that the organization must constantly adapt to the demands of political and technological change. But we have also learned what must not change. NATO's strategic concept must begin and end with NATO's founding ideals.

Mr. Chairman, as you know, the story of NATO and the United States was written in significant part by the members of this committee. It was before this panel that Secretary of State Acheson first made the case for American participation. It was here that administrations from both parties sought and received support during the difficult Cold War years. It was to you that Defense Secretary Cohen and I came in search of consent for NATO enlargement during the 1990s.

For six decades, this committee has done a superb job of overseeing America's participation in NATO, and of helping our citizens to understand why this alliance matters and why its future should be a concern to us all.

Today's hearing is a continuation of that tradition – and I thank you again for the chance to participate.

Now I would be pleased to respond to any questions you might have.