

Statement of Victoria Nuland
Permanent Representative-Designate
to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization

U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
May 24, 2005

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, I am honored to appear before you today as President Bush's nominee to serve as United States Permanent Representative to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. I would like to thank the President, the Vice President, Secretary Rice and Secretary Rumsfeld for the confidence they have shown in me and our career Foreign Service by my nomination.

I would like to thank Senator Lieberman for his kind introductory remarks today. My husband and I were both raised in Connecticut, and our families have valued the service and the friendship of our home state Senator for almost two decades.

Mr. Chairman, if confirmed by the Senate, I will work closely with this Committee and all members of Congress to strengthen the security of the American people and the community of democracies through the organization that President Bush has called "the main pillar of our security" – NATO. In a speech in Brussels last February, the President noted that in its first 56 years "our transatlantic alliance frustrated the plans of dictators, served the highest ideals of humanity, and set a violent century on a new and better course." The President called for a "new era of transatlantic unity" because when Europe and North America stand together, "no problem can stand against us."

If confirmed, that is the spirit I will take back to NATO Headquarters. I have seen first hand the power of our great Alliance when it stands firmly against terror and in defense of freedom. The most horrific 24 hours of my twenty year diplomatic career were also the proudest when, as U.S. Deputy Permanent Representative to the Alliance on September 12, 2001, I sat behind Ambassador Nicholas Burns at the North Atlantic Council table as our Allies invoked Article 5 of the NATO Charter – an attack on one is an attack on all -- in response to the heinous attacks on our homeland. Americans woke up the morning after September 11 to find they were not alone, and in the months and years that followed, NATO:

- joined us in Afghanistan for its first “out of area” deployment; today, over 8000 Allied troops representing all NATO nations are providing security there,
- launched a major transformation of its missions, military structure and capabilities to meet the new threats of terror and Weapons of Mass Destruction,
- welcomed seven new members,
- created the NATO Response Force,
- launched Operation Active Endeavor to fight terrorist activity in the Mediterranean, and
- created the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative to deepen cooperation with partners in the broader Middle East and North Africa.

Today, thirteen NATO nations and seven of the Alliance’s partners have troops in the coalition in Iraq, and NATO has conducted more than 500 training sessions in Baghdad, reaching hundreds of Iraqi officers. And, heading out to a new continent, the Alliance is now in discussions with the African Union on how best to meet its request for support for its peacekeeping mission in Darfur, Sudan. While NATO has had its share of stresses and strains these last three and a half years, we must not lose sight of how much has been accomplished. To quote former Alliance Secretary General George Robertson, “this ain’t your Daddy’s NATO!”

But we cannot be content with where we are. As the President said in his second inaugural address, “the survival of liberty in our land increasingly depends on the success of liberty in other lands. The best hope for peace in our world is the expansion of freedom in all the world.” Since NATO’s founding, Allies have always stood together in defense of liberty at home, and now we must do even more together to defend and advance freedom wherever people crave the liberties we enjoy.

NATO has been a powerful magnet and mentor for former captive nations across the Euro-Atlantic space. From Croatia to Ukraine, the prospect of NATO membership offers a powerful incentive to make tough reform decisions, and the Alliance’s door must remain open to those who are striving to meet the criteria of membership. Similarly, the NATO-Russia relationship which I have helped nurture on and off for a decade can do more to serve our shared interest in security and democracy if we can overcome old habits and suspicions. And in Kosovo, the stability NATO has provided since 1999 must now reinforce our efforts to resolve the issue of status so we can hasten the day when an international protectorate is no longer required there.

The Alliance has also extended a hand across the Mediterranean. From Kuwait to Morocco, nations of the Broader Middle East want to deepen their contacts with NATO to strengthen their security and prosperity at home. NATO has much to offer those partners and friends who want to join us in fighting terror and advancing democratic change in that vital area of the world, and we must do more. The U.S. is also working with the European Union to promote security, reform and freedom in the Broader Middle East; the time is overdue for NATO and the EU to work more closely together in support of these goals. Nearer to home, NATO and the EU can also do far more together to advance our nonproliferation goals and protect our homelands from the terrorists who would abuse our free territory to plot, plan their operations, and move their money, people and materiel. NATO Secretary General de Hoop Scheffer has called for a “strategic partnership” between the two great multilateral institutions in Brussels, and we support that goal.

All of this will require an even stronger, fleetier, smarter NATO. If confirmed, I will work to fulfill the promise of the Prague Capabilities Initiative to build more capable, deployable forces, and strengthen Allies’ ability and will to use those capabilities. As President Bush and Secretary Rice have pledged, I also look forward to deepening and broadening our strategic consultations within the Alliance on issues as diverse as Middle East peace, the challenges we face in North Korea and Iran, and our shared interests in China’s peaceful rise. We must have a strong strategic consensus among the Allies if we are to be effective in meeting these challenges together.

This is an ambitious agenda but we are living in challenging times. As a career officer whose professional life has been committed to advancing freedom and security in Europe and beyond, I can think of no more exciting opportunity than to go back to this NATO now. I thank you for considering my nomination