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P R E S S R E L E A S E



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Friday, January 23, 2004

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“The United States, NATO, And The Greater Middle East”
Speech by U.S. Senator Chuck Hagel
U.S. Mission to NATO
Brussels

Last month, former NATO Secretary General Lord Robertson gave a speech in London titled “The Omaha Milkman Today.” In the speech, Lord Robertson reminded his audience that one of the drafters of the Washington Treaty in 1949 sought to make the language of the treaty establishing the Atlantic Alliance so clear and concise that even a milkman from Omaha, Nebraska would be able to understand it.

As a United States Senator from Nebraska, I commend the drafters for setting this lofty benchmark. I have learned to trust the instincts and insights of Nebraska milkmen, farmers, and all of my constituents. Americans, including and especially those from the Midwest – my part of the country – respect and appreciate clarity and straight talk. They also understand the connections between prosperity and security at home, and the success of our foreign, trade, and economic policies abroad.

The clarity and durability of the Atlantic Alliance begins with the shared values, interests, and destiny of its members. Even at its inception, NATO was more than just a military alliance built to defend against the Soviets. Europeans and North Americans, including Nebraska milkmen, understood the common purpose of the alliance and the challenges it faced. There was no significant debate about whether the Soviet Union represented a threat to American security and world peace. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization became the most successful alliance in history because it matched purpose with power and served the interests of its members.

The end of the Cold War and the reunification of Germany raised new questions about the future of the Atlantic Alliance. Some argued that the European Union could not adjust to the reintegration of a united Germany into Europe. Some predicted that NATO could be a victim of its own success, a relic of history, or that it might be

relegated to keeping the peace in Europe – in other words, a regional security organization. We were reminded that alliances are formed in response to threats. In the absence of the threat from the Soviet Union, NATO's fate was uncertain. What now was its purpose?

The durability and vision of the Atlantic Alliance, however, was captured well by Henry Kissinger in his book, *Diplomacy*:

“The architects of the Atlantic Alliance would have been incredulous had they been told that victory in the Cold War would raise doubts about the future of their creation. They took it for granted that the prize for victory in the Cold War was a lasting Atlantic partnership. In the name of that goal, some of the decisive political battles of the Cold War were fought and won. In the process, America was tied to Europe by permanent consultative institutions and an integrated military command system – a structure of a scope and duration unique in the history of coalitions.”

And in building the Atlantic Alliance, the Atlantic Alliance helped build a better world.

During periods of historic change, alliances and institutions must adapt to remain vital and relevant. During the 1990's, NATO began a process of adaptation as it sought to define a new role in world affairs. This included an expansion of membership, welcoming new countries from eastern Europe, and establishing a new relationship with Russia.

September 11, 2001, brought NATO's purpose into clearer focus. Today, the greatest threat to the Atlantic Alliance, NATO, and the world, comes from international terrorist groups and networks, and the potential for these groups to obtain and use weapons of mass destruction. The threat to NATO today does not come from great powers, but from weak ones. Terrorism finds sanctuary in failed or failing states, in unresolved regional conflicts, and in the misery of endemic poverty and despair. No single state, including the United States, even with its vast military and economic power, can meet these challenges alone.

The struggle in which we are now engaged is a global struggle that does not readily conform to our understanding of military confrontations or alliances of previous eras. It is not a traditional contest of standing armies battling over territory. Failed or failing states, or states in transition, like Iraq and Afghanistan, are not rebuilt by military force alone. Progress must be made in these countries with human rights, good governance and economic reform before we can expect lasting security and stability. The next generation of Arabs and Muslims may either embrace the promise of freedom, or drift toward the politics of despair. Military power will continue to play a vital role,

but the future success of NATO will be determined by its members' ability to deepen and expand their cooperation in the intelligence, law enforcement, economic, diplomatic and humanitarian fields.

The strategic focus of NATO's efforts in the first half of the 21st Century will be the Greater Middle East, Iraq, Afghanistan, the Mediterranean, and the Israeli-Palestinian issue. The shifting dynamics of history in this new century have settled the "out of area" debate for NATO. NATO has recognized this reality with its presence in Afghanistan.

Adapting to this new strategic environment will not come easily or cheaply and will require a new NATO strategic doctrine. This effort is now under way. As NATO adjusts to both an expanded membership and a new global strategic environment, NATO must address the gaps in military expenditures and capabilities of its members. The tough decisions cannot continue to be deferred.

It is essential that NATO members not allow themselves to drift into adversarial relationships over disagreements. The challenges and differences that will always exist among members must be resolved inside of NATO. Not outside of NATO. Differences must first be brought to NATO. That means institutional flexibility will need to be addressed within NATO, especially now that it will soon have 26 members. NATO can only be undermined by its own internal distractions.

Two years ago, my colleague Senator Dick Lugar, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, told an audience here at NATO headquarters that terrorism represents a global and existential threat which will shape and determine America's alliances. Senator Lugar has been a consistent leader in giving priority to the links between terrorism and weapons of mass destruction. He said,

"It is a time to think big, not small. It is a time when our proposals should not be measured by what we think is 'doable' but rather shaped by what needs to be done to meet the new existential threat we face."

President Bush has offered a plan for the Greater Middle East that is potentially historic in scope, and conveys the strategic importance of this region for American foreign policy. America's support for freedom in the Greater Middle East must be matched with operational programs of partnership with the peoples and governments of the region to promote more democratic politics and more open economies. NATO is critical to this success. These and other issues will be addressed at both the meeting of the Group of Eight industrial nations in Sea Island, Georgia and at the June NATO Summit in Istanbul.

Let me now suggest five specific areas where I believe NATO can play a greater role in bringing security and stability to the Greater Middle East: Turkey, Afghanistan, Iraq, the Mediterranean, and the Israeli-Palestinian problem.

Tom Friedman has described this era in world politics as a “hinge of history.” And Turkey hangs on that hinge. Our course of action with Arab and Islamic societies, including Turkey, must emphasize, in Friedman’s analysis, building bridges rather than digging ditches. The NATO alliance can provide a mechanism for building these bridges. As Europe and NATO have reached out to a united Germany and the states of the former Warsaw Pact, we must now ensure that we apply the same inclusive approach to Turkey. Turkey has been a vital member of NATO. Prime Minister Erdogan will visit Washington next week to discuss NATO and a wide range of issues with President Bush. Under Erdogan’s leadership, Turkey has been a strong and honest force for the people of Turkey. It deserves credit and recognition for this effort.

Turkey is also a cultural and geographic bridge to the Arab and Islamic world. By drawing Turkey closer, and supporting EU membership, the Atlantic Alliance will have a better chance of encouraging continued political and economic reforms in Turkey. An inclusive approach by Europe toward Turkey will also increase the prospects for resolution of long-standing disputes between Turkey and Greece over Cyprus and between Turkey and Armenia. If we were to push Turkey away, we would jeopardize our interests in bringing greater peace and stability to the entire region.

In Afghanistan, the *loya jirga* recently completed drafting a new constitution that sets a course for elections later this year and holds the promise of a democratic transition and the rule of law. The government of President Hamid Karzai and the people of Afghanistan have come a long way in the past two years. But sustained political progress in Afghanistan will depend on greater progress in security and economic reconstruction. The job in Afghanistan is far from complete. Reconstituted Taliban and al-Qaeda forces continue to threaten the fragile progress that has been made there.

The role of NATO has evolved and become more and more important to the future of Afghanistan. Last year, NATO assumed leadership of the UN-mandated International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), the Alliance’s first mission beyond the Euro-Atlantic region. NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer said earlier this month that “Afghanistan is the number one priority for the Alliance.”

NATO’s goal should be eventually to assume responsibility for all military and reconstruction operations in Afghanistan, including Operation Enduring Freedom. On January 6, NATO took responsibility for the German Provincial Reconstruction Team

(PRT) in Kunduz. This is a good step, but ISAF needs to begin planning for deployments in southern and southeastern Afghanistan, where security and reconstruction are most threatened by Taliban and Al-Qaeda forces operating in the difficult border region with Pakistan. The expansion of ISAF beyond Kabul, and of NATO-led PRT's throughout the country, will strengthen efforts to manage the transition to stability and democracy in Afghanistan.

It is critical that NATO assets promised for Afghanistan be there – on the ground and operational. There are reports that these assets are lagging and are behind schedule. This is dangerous. NATO must ensure that the commitments made are fulfilled and honored – now. The Afghanistan Freedom Support Act of 2002, which I sponsored in the Senate and which President Bush signed into law, authorized \$1 billion dollars to support ISAF expansion. As former NATO Secretary General Lord Robertson said in his farewell speech to the NATO Council in December regarding Afghanistan, “Failure would be a crushing blow, not just for NATO but for each and every NATO country.”

Third, NATO will need to play a significant role in helping bring security and stability to Iraq. Last year, NATO committed to providing force generation, communication, logistics, and movement support for Polish forces in Iraq. That's a good start. However, NATO should initiate discussions to take over the duties of the Polish sector in central Iraq, or possibly assume responsibility for a division in northern Iraq. I am encouraged by German Chancellor Schroeder telling the German parliament last week that his government could support the deployment of NATO troops to Iraq.

Bringing security and stability to Iraq is a shared global and regional interest for all NATO members. There may have been disagreements over how best to deal with Saddam Hussein's regime prior to the war, but that is behind us. The alliance must be able to manage disagreements, as we have in the past. Suez, Vietnam, and the deployment of intermediate-range nuclear missiles in Germany in 1983, come to mind. Henry Kissinger has likened America's disagreements with Europe and our NATO allies over the years to the, “grating character of family squabbles.” Iraq should be put in the same light.

If Iraq becomes a failed state, the liberation of Iraq will be an historic opportunity squandered – for Iraq, for the Greater Middle East, and the world. NATO's collective credibility, as well as its collective security, cannot be disconnected from the end result in Baghdad. Our common policies and interests throughout the Greater Middle East and the Islamic world – including the war on terrorism, resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and global energy security – will be directly affected by the outcome in Iraq.

President Bush has set an ambitious timetable for turning authority over to a new

Iraqi government by June 30. This is the right course, but the path is difficult. There are great risks and high costs that come with this effort. As in Afghanistan, progress toward security and economic reconstruction must complement political progress. Earlier this month, I met with UN Secretary General Kofi Annan about the urgency of getting the United Nations back into Iraq. The UN has the expertise and legitimacy necessary to help ensure success in Iraq . . . but its role must be clearly defined and it must be given decision-making authority to carry out its mission. NATO's role in Iraq will evolve, but the discussion and planning should begin now. There is limited hope for Iraq's future without the full support and commitment of the world community, especially the United Nations and NATO, during this critical transition period. The United States cannot sustain a long-term policy in Iraq without the active partnerships of the United Nations and NATO.

Fourth, NATO should expand and deepen its partnership with the countries of the Mediterranean. I know NATO is seriously exploring new and long-term possibilities for this relationship. There have been some significant achievements in this area. For the most part, however, our interactions with our Mediterranean partners have until now been more dialogue than partnership. We should consider a modified version of the "Partnership for Peace" for the Mediterranean. General James Jones, Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, and Commander of the United States European Command, described Operation Active Endeavor to me as a model for NATO naval security cooperation in the Mediterranean. In the future, NATO should consider expanding the participation of Mediterranean countries in Operation Active Endeavor and other NATO Mediterranean naval missions.

Over the coming years the Mediterranean will take on even greater strategic importance for NATO. The Mediterranean should be considered as a critically important geo-political region with its own dynamics. Terrorism, illegal trafficking in narcotics and persons, and other threats are real in this region. These are major security concerns for Europe and the Atlantic Alliance. The Mediterranean draws together Europe, North Africa and the Middle East. All of the Mediterranean countries are therefore influenced by European, Arab and African political developments.

The strategic significance of North Africa may be easy to overlook, especially given the challenges we face in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere. But we need to keep a wider perspective in viewing and understanding this region. In Rick Atkinson's outstanding book, *An Army at Dawn*, which recounts the North African military campaign in World War II, he reminds us that what happens in North Africa can never be considered in a vacuum.

Last month, I visited Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco, with my colleague, Senator

Jack Reed of Rhode Island. I believe there is tremendous potential for expanded security cooperation, especially intelligence gathering and sharing, and economic and trade development. These countries are taking important steps toward political and economic reform. They need to do more, but all three countries are moving in the right direction. This progress can be undermined by instability in West Africa and by radical Islamic groups and terrorists based in this region. These areas require more attention from the Atlantic Alliance.

Fifth, NATO should begin to plan for a role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. I believe a NATO peace-keeping mission may eventually be called upon to help secure an Israeli-Palestinian peace. The day may come when NATO troops monitor the birth of a Palestinian state. NATO is the only institution with the credibility and capability to undertake such a critical mission. The time is not yet right for this development, but I believe we must begin to move our thinking, policies, and planning in that direction.

One step toward greater engagement is more focused military-to-military contacts with Israel and the Arab countries of the Mediterranean. NATO should also consider formal military training relationships with other countries throughout the Middle East.

We must accept that there will be neither stability nor security in the Greater Middle East until the Israeli-Palestinian issue is resolved. It is woven into the fabric of the region, including our relationships with all Arab and Muslim countries, and cannot be separated from our efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Change is difficult . . . especially for institutions. It forces us to re-examine the foundations of our identity, purpose, and policies. The world does not have the luxury of choosing the challenges that it faces. They are complex and interrelated – terrorism, poverty, endemic disease, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, failing states, and protracted conflicts – and they do not lend themselves to easy solutions.

The task ahead for the greatest alliance in history is to build on the success of the last fifty years to make NATO relevant to the challenges of our time. This will require strengthening trust among its members. As Albert Einstein wrote, “Every kind of peaceful cooperation among men is primarily based on mutual trust and only secondarily on institutions such as courts of justice and police.” Trust can neither be assumed, nor squandered, nor taken for granted, even in strong institutions such as NATO. Trust among members is both the glue and the foundation that allows NATO as an institution to meet the challenges of this era.

The future of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization will be determined by the outcome in the Greater Middle East. This is an historic burden for all of us in a region

that is rich in culture and history, but so far at odds with modernity. Our approach requires subtlety and vision, as well as determination and purpose.

Secretary of State Colin Powell, in the January/February issue of *Foreign Affairs*, writes that, “we fight terrorism because we must, but we seek a better world because we can – because it is our desire, and our destiny, to do so.”

There has never been a partnership or alliance historically as well-positioned or more politically capable of leading the change for a safer and better world than this “Omaha Milkman” institution called NATO. One of the great achievements of the last half of the 20th Century was a reshaping of world order, bringing new freedoms and prosperity to millions of people who had known neither freedom nor prosperity. NATO helped guarantee much of this progress. And so it will be for the 21st Century. NATO’s mark has been set. Its responsibilities are clear. This is the nobility of its inheritance. This is the reality of its destiny.