Inauguration of the Allied Command Transformation

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Introduction

Admiral Forbes, thank you for the kind introduction. Admiral Giambastiani, let me add my congratulations to you and the command, and my thanks for the opportunity to be with this distinguished group today. I believe the establishment of ACT [Allied Command Transformation] marks a very important institutional turning point. At a time when the United States and several other allies and coalition partners are coming off of two major military surges – Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom – and still digesting the long-term implications of 9/11, NATO is setting an evolutionary course to remain the world's premier security alliance in the 21st century, as it was in the 20th.

The expansion of NATO, now into its second round, is highly significant. From the perspective of the initial Atlantic Alliance members, not only are former Cold War adversaries no longer adversaries. But far more importantly, we now have as security partners people who profoundly understand the difference between liberty and oppression, and whose strength of character and willpower were forged over generations of suffering and survival under totalitarian rule. To have allies such as this is truly a blessing.

We can, and will if you like, talk about armaments cooperation today; but let us not make the mistake of measuring NATO's strength solely by the number of tanks or ships in our inventory. Transformation means, among other things, magnifying the superior abilities of individual people through technology and its application, with decisive effects.

Not far from here, the U.S. Army's Training and Doctrine Command preaches the importance of so-called "-ilities" – mobility, agility, adaptability, survivability, lethality, and the like. I used to hear about the "-ilities" often in the late 1990s as a civilian participant in the Army's future wargaming. In one of these wargames, a fellow participant, Richard Hart Sinnreich, said something quite profound when talking about warfighting, now and in the future. He said that the one "ility" that matters is "indomitability" – the refusal to be coerced by force of arms.

Colleagues, the NATO alliance is built on a political foundation of willpower, and commitment to a common security vision. And by that measure – the strength of character, and the moral certainty that security remains precious and vital to all of us in a world where powerful negative forces still operate – no one should doubt that our alliance is as strong as it has ever been. The citizens of the NATO invitee countries make us all better allies, and remind us why our work is so very relevant.

Looking to the Future

Just as NATO Defense and Foreign Ministers have been hard at work in recent days shaping our alliance priorities, there is much thinking in Washington about the future of our own military forces. Lessons-learned papers are being drafted. Many of us are very busy now with Bush Administration policy reviews that had been sidelined by the major military operations of the past year and a half. Throughout the U.S. national security community, the focus is turning to the future.

By standing up the Allied Command for Transformation, realigning the NATO Command structure, reaffirming the Prague Capabilities Commitments and focusing on the NATO Reaction Force, we are all acknowledging that the 21st century world is not the same world that our predecessors confronted in April of 1949 when the North Atlantic Treaty was signed. And as we look forward to strengthen our collective security, I think each of our governments will be well served by giving due consideration to the changes affecting our own security and that of the international environment.

Much has been said and written – probably too much – about the end of the Cold War and the implications for NATO's future relevance. Let us openly recognize that the likelihood of a major war in Europe is very low. This reality, far from spelling trouble for NATO, is to my mind the very opposite – a strategic indicator that demonstrates the alliance's success. Just because a society finds itself in superb health does not mean that there is no longer any role for a first-rate medical profession; to the contrary, good health is the direct result of excellence in medicine. And so it is with NATO and a more peaceful Europe, full of the promise of prosperity.

What lessons should we take from the recent, and ongoing, operations in Afghanistan and Iraq? Clearly one is that NATO only reinforces its contemporary relevance by contributing to security outside of Europe. It is absolutely appropriate that NATO undertake military missions out-of-area when the security interests of the allies so dictate.

There are many more lessons-learned for NATO countries from these recent experiences. We can see that one crisis – Afghanistan – can impose three missions on our military forces: emergency humanitarian relief, combat operations, and peacekeeping operations. In Iraq, the U.S. and others are similarly mobilizing allied and coalition forces tailored for stability operations, who will move in to replace the existing combat forces. NATO will play important roles in both places. There are still other potential missions that may be required in this century: counter-proliferation, rapid response to a failing-state crisis to avoid widespread killing, and defense against a major military threat of aggression, to name a few.

While NATO countries may be willing to respond to all of these forms of crisis, political will must be backed by military capabilities. We have already seen that the capabilities appropriate to expeditionary missions such as in Afghanistan and Iraq notably include lift and sustainment. Particularly for those forces engaged in combat operations, interoperable systems are essential.

Defense Trade Policy Review

Of course, the emphasis on interoperability and a higher baseline of common capabilities is not a new alliance issue. Lord Robertson has made this a central concern for my government as well as other NATO governments.

You may be aware that the U.S. is presently working actively on a comprehensive defense trade policy review, at President Bush's initiative. Let me say a few words about this today. First, I wish to preview that along with my Defense Department colleague Deputy Under Secretary Lisa Bronson, I will be briefing the content of this policy review in detail a month from now, on July 18 in Brussels, at the invitation of the Secretary General.

So we are making good progress toward a conclusion, but still at work on important issues at this time.

Most people seem to think that the Presidential review is primarily about the defense export licensing process; and indeed, for a number of years there has been a palpable discontent, among U.S. defense exporters and allied governments alike, about the process of obtaining licenses from the State Department. I assumed my present position just over two years ago and reviewed a mountain of criticism aimed at making the licensing process speedier and less cumbersome.

We are making a lot of progress on the licensing process, which Ms. Bronson and I will detail a month from now in Brussels. Allied military forces will have seen evidence of this in the recent combat operations, as the State Department and the Pentagon managed to approve licenses for defense items needed for Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom in 48 hours or less. This is a dramatic change, even from a few years ago when equipment needs arose from the outset of the Kosovo operation.

But the focus on process obscures a second, very important aspect of the policy review – namely, the issue of what defense technologies the U.S. is prepared to release to other countries. This is, arguably, the more relevant issue when we are talking about interoperability.

I cannot tell you what President Bush will decide on any particular issue in this review. However, a few insights that bear on NATO transformation are possible at this stage:

- First, real transformation will mean investment by one and all. It will not be cheap.
- Second, serious alliance transformation efforts will give Europe a greater voice and role in security affairs, including outside of Europe. Conversely, U.S. transformation without a complementary NATO evolution would arguably increase pressures for unilateral – or nearly unilateral – U.S. operations, with all that implies at the political level. So, to my mind, transformation is about a lot more than technologies and military capabilities.
- Third, defense trade has moved from the industrial age to the digital age. We all need to be less worried about

a piece of heavy military equipment going overseas and more worried about a CD-ROM full of advanced software and design data being sent across borders with the click of a computer mouse. What is my point? Governments all need to band together to manage the security risks that accompany international defense industrial cooperation in today's world. The old ways are obsolete. I will have more to say about this in Brussels next month.

That gives you a sense of the issues we are addressing in Washington. What I wish to underscore this afternoon is that the Bush Administration is keeping NATO goals very much in mind as we conduct this review. The mark of success for this policy review will be an alliance that remains equal to any future challenge. For us, while we are improving our export licensing process, this is fundamentally about advancing foreign and security policy objectives.

The Tactical Environment

Since President Bush took office, the emphasis in U.S. security policy has, very appropriately, been on major threats: international terrorism, WMD [weapons of mass destruction], and missile proliferation being the key concerns.

I would like to suggest that as the NATO allies embark on the transformation challenge, looking at the most serious security concerns on the threat spectrum, we pay more concerted attention to lower-end threats than I believe we have done lately.

I am speaking of the prevalence of small arms, light weapons, munitions stocks, and the like, in the wrong hands. If one looks at the prevalence of these smaller conventional armaments in troubled areas from Colombia to the Balkans, to West Africa and the Congo, to Afghanistan and now particularly Iraq, which is full of weapons and munitions stockpiles – let us face up to the fact that there is a serious problem here.

These arms are often irresponsibly exported, fraudulently shipped, and corruptly procured. They make areas of crisis far less hospitable to political mediation and peacekeeping, and they pose a force protection problem for all of our militaries. So that is a suggested lesson-learned as ACT studies the tactical environment for potential future operations, particularly out-of-area. Perhaps we should be far more ambitious and comprehensive in our political-level thinking about the security challenge posed by these smaller conventional arms, what one might call Weapons of Local Destruction.

The Strategic Environment

Let me conclude with a comment about the political glue that binds this formidable alliance together – the strategic context, if you will, for the road that lies ahead.

There is no armed force superior to this alliance. Our solidarity is our foremost and indispensable guarantee of our security; it is, in Clausewitzian terms, our center of gravity.

Without overstating the case, I wish to sound a note of concern on a matter that is not before the alliance, but is before our respective governments, namely the differences between many in Europe and the United States over my government's good faith effort to reach bilateral arrangements under Article 98 of the Rome Treaty, so that Americans and U.S. military forces in particular will not automatically risk exposure to prosecution by the International Criminal Court [ICC].

This is not the time or place to ventilate arguments that will be well known to the legal counsels in our foreign ministries. I raise this for the following reasons:

- The U.S. is pursuing agreements that are not designed or intended to harm the ICC or disrespect its supporters. We have been following a course that was privately recommended to us by some of our European friends.

- And yet, increasingly many European governments, and I should say the EU [European Union], are treating this issue as a zero-sum game, a contest in which the agreements we are proposing must be opposed and prevented.

- Since the issue here is the judicial treatment not of Europeans but rather Americans, it is a sensitive subject at the highest political levels here in the U.S. We have today more than 50 security treaty commitments and more than 400,000 forces deployed outside the United States, to say nothing of journalists, NGO workers and other citizens abroad.

My message here is that even as we celebrate NATO's future direction today, it is becoming hard to ignore a

transatlantic rift that seems to be turning into an open wound. I certainly hope policymakers of vision and goodwill can arrest this unhealthy process before it becomes too prominent a factor in U.S.-European relations, so we can finish our efforts around the world on Article 98 agreements and put our differences over the ICC behind all of us. There is still time to manage this issue well – but the course we are on is troublesome.

Admiral Forbes – Sir Ian – encouraged me to cast as wide a perspective as I desired, and I hope I have not abused the opportunity. Thank you all for your kind attention.

[End]