

**TESTIMONY TO THE
THE SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE
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Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for inviting me to testify about on-going efforts by countries in the Balkans to normalize their military relations with the U.S. and NATO, and to ensure regional stability. Recently the U.S. Department of Defense held annual bilateral defense consultations with Macedonia and Albania and will do so next week with Croatia. All three countries are making impressive strides to advance defense reforms and prepare themselves for NATO membership. Furthermore, they have made the transition from consumers of security assistance to contributors as allies in the Global War on Terrorism.

One of the most important lessons we have taken from our experiences in Bosnia-Herzegovina is the need to encourage self-reliance from the very beginning -- to avoid actions that create an enduring dependency and help these societies take responsibility for their own governance and security as soon as possible. This lesson was applied well over a year ago in Macedonia as NATO successfully completed Task Force Amber Fox to provide a safe and secure environment for implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement following widespread civil conflict in Macedonia in 2001.

As President Bush has said, we went in to the Balkans together with our NATO Allies and we will go out together. Our approach is to adjust force levels in response to changing security situations, and enable our partners in the Balkans to provide for their own security as rapidly as possible.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

During the recent NATO Summit at Istanbul Heads of State and Government agreed to conclude NATO's successful SFOR operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina by the end of the year. We can all take pride in this accomplishment along with the Bosnian people. The Summit stressed that while NATO's military relations with Bosnia are being placed on a normalized footing, NATO's long-term commitment to Bosnia remains unchanged. A NATO headquarters, headed by an American general, will form the Alliance's residual military presence in the country. The headquarters will have the principal tasks of supporting Bosnia's already promising defense reforms, advancing counter-terrorism, and supporting the apprehension of major indicted war criminals such as Radovan Karadzic.

In March Bosnia officially formed a state-level ministry of defense and general staff signaling a new era in the country's military structure. This was the outgrowth of excellent work by the Bosnians, High Representative Lord Paddy Ashdown, and former Senate staffer and Assistant Secretary of Defense, Jim Locher, who heads the Bosnia Defense Reform Commission. Bosnia is getting closer to joining PfP. However, as the

Istanbul Summit Communique notes, Bosnia has failed to live up to its obligation to cooperate fully with The Hague War Crimes Tribunal, largely due to obstructionist elements in the Republika Srpska. The U.S. strongly supports the strong actions of High Representative Ashdown to dismiss from office Serb officials seeking to obstruct Bosnia's efforts to render indicted war criminals to justice.

Bilaterally, Bosnia and Herzegovina has been responsive to U.S. concerns. Bosnia was one of the first countries to ratify an Article 98 agreement to protect U.S. service personnel. Recently Bosnia offered a troop contribution of explosive ordnance disposal experts to the coalition in Iraq.

Kosovo

Challenges remain in Kosovo, although progress is being made. The goal in Kosovo is to establish the rule of law and rebuild institutions capable of providing a safe, secure and prosperous environment for all of its inhabitants, while ensuring that it does not become a safe haven for extremism, terrorism or criminal elements. Significant difficulties remain with freedom of movement and return of ethnic minorities. The primary threat continues to come from internal, loosely organized extremist and criminal groups, some of which have transnational links.

KFOR is tasked with building a secure environment to facilitate democracy -- including deterring renewed hostility, ensuring public safety and order, supporting

humanitarian assistance and coordinating with the UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). Pursuant to UN Security Council Resolution 1244, UNMIK is responsible for civilian administration in Kosovo, including the maintenance of civil law and order. The review date strategy, endorsed by the UN Security Council requires measurable progress in the development of functional political, economic and judicial institutions before determining Kosovo's final status.

KFOR started up in 1999 with a force totaling 40,000 troops on the ground. There are now less than 18,000 (1,800 U.S.). At Istanbul, NATO heads of state confirmed that a significant KFOR presence remains essential to security and to promote a political settlement. This past March, a wave of mob violence broke out in the province. During the March 17-19 period of violence, international peacekeepers actually faced hostile fire.

Although brief, the spasm of violence claimed 19 lives in several ethnic communities. Property damage was significant, and the Serbian community suffered the greatest losses. These events highlighted that the stability we had witnessed in prior months was fragile. It also revealed some underlying weaknesses of UNMIK and the Kosovo Police Service in coping with threats to law and order.

KFOR's swift response was essential in halting the March violence. A NATO "lessons learned" study highlighted areas where KFOR could enhance its effectiveness, in particular, the troops in KFOR need to be less hampered by national restrictions.

SACEUR Gen. Jones is seeking to eliminate these restrictions -- also known as national caveats -- on how COMKFOR can use the troops. U.S. forces performed admirably during the crisis; they are not subject to any limitations or restrictions identified in NATO's study. KFOR's robust rules of engagement need to be fully applied by all troop contributors. Also KFOR soldiers need to have the equipment and training to handle riot control. Intelligence capabilities need improvement in order to better anticipate and then act to prevent such incidents in the future. Finally, KFOR needs to reduce the "tooth to tail" ratio to ensure that the maximum number of troops are actively patrolling.

The United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) needs to take steps to strengthen its performance. We consider this a top priority, especially in the field of civil security, where the local multi-ethnic Kosovo Police Service is being developed so that it may in the future handle many duties KFOR must currently perform. This is essential. We look forward to the change in leadership at UNMIK, including a strong new Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) in Soren Jessen-Petersen and an American Principal Deputy.

Moving To a Regional Approach to Force Structure and Deployment

We have adopted a regional approach to managing military forces in the Balkans. USEUCOM Commander Gen. Jim Jones has placed all U.S. forces serving in the Balkans under the operational control of ADM Johnson who commands NATO's Joint Forces Command based in Naples, Italy. This provides much more flexibility to move forces

around the region as needed. Under the Joint Operations Area (JOA) approach, NATO conducts a Periodic Mission Review (PMR) every six months which evaluates the security situation on the ground and makes recommendations, including on force levels. The Review is submitted to the North Atlantic Council (NAC) for decision. At Istanbul the NAC decided not to reduce KFOR's size at present.

The JOA provides for the use of reserve forces at the tactical, operational and strategic levels. These forces are able to deploy rapidly from within the theater and from "over-the-horizon" locations in the event of a crisis. For example, during the March riots in Kosovo, NATO was able to surge an additional 3,000 troops within a few days, the first arriving in less than 24 hours.

In both Bosnia and Kosovo we have pioneered the use of small, strategically-positioned "forward operating bases" to inject an international troop presence in specific areas. This presence advances important goals such as inter-ethnic cooperation and refugee returns by the sense of confidence and security having troops in local areas provides.

Indicted War Criminals

Of continued importance and concern is that indicted war criminals, particularly Radovan Karadzic, Ratko Mladic, and Ante Gotovina, remain at large. Protected by criminals associated with extremist parties, Karadzic's continued influence on Bosnian

Serb politics is a cancer in the body of the Bosnian state. As long as Karadzic and his associates move about freely, Bosnia will not be able to achieve Euro-Atlantic integration. The same applies to Serbia and Montenegro which continues to harbor Ratko Mladic. Full cooperation on war crimes issues remains an important condition for normalizing US military to military relations with Serbia and Montenegro.

Serbia and Montenegro

On June 19, 2003 Serbia and Montenegro formally applied for membership in the Partnership for Peace. We support Serbia and Montenegro's PfP membership once it meets remaining conditions set by NATO, which are: (1) full cooperation with The Hague; and (2) dropping the suits at the International Court of Justice against eight NATO countries stemming from the Kosovo air campaign of 1999.

We hope that the election on June 27 of pro-Western reformer Boris Tadic as Serbian President will be a turning point and that he will succeed in clearly and firmly orienting Serbia and Montenegro toward NATO and the West. As Minister of Defense he spearheaded several concrete defense reforms, including: empowering and reorganizing its Ministry of Defense to provide greater civilian control of the military; reducing its armed forces, reshaping its military intelligence service in accord with democratic norms, and taking steps to eliminate corrupt Milosevic-era institutions and individuals.

DOD is working to develop a program of technical assistance and other activities to assist the Ministry of Defense in its reform efforts once Serbia and Montenegro meets the necessary conditions set by NATO to join PfP. We hope Serbia will also sign an Article 98 agreement soon. A military bilateral affairs officer is in place working closely with the Ministry of Defense on actions to advance defense reforms. Meanwhile, we are setting the stage for future cooperation through the Joint Contact Team Program (JCTP) run by the US European Command and programs carried out by the Marshall Center. Eight scheduled programs have been launched with the Serbia and Montenegro Armed Forces for 2004 on diverse subjects such as “Civilian Control of the Military,” to how to develop NATO-compatible national security strategies. Current plans call for 17 such programs to take place next year.

Mr. Chairman, I am also pleased to announce the U.S. and the Government of Serbia and Montenegro have agreed to establish a State Partnership Program with the National Guard. The Ohio National Guard has kindly offered to serve as SaM armed forces’ state partner. This is an important program that provides countries ongoing close links to the U.S. military in support of defense reform and transformation objectives.

Macedonia, Croatia, Albania

Macedonia, Croatia and Albania are on the path to NATO membership. They are participating in NATO’s Membership Action Plan, which includes the development of

reform plans for their military establishments. The biggest challenge for these countries is to maintain a steady pace on defense reform, strengthen inter-operability with NATO, and develop niche capabilities.

We are pressing political leaders to continue making the tough decisions that are necessary for transformation. We have completed a Defense Assessment for each of these three countries to assist them with planning and implementing defense reform priorities. They are taking steps to reduce the sizes of their respective armed forces and to restructure them to build more flexible, mobile forces that can better contribute to NATO. In Macedonia and Albania, for example, we have Defense Department contractors advising the governments on how best to implement reforms they have decided to make.

During our bilateral defense consultations with each of these countries, we discuss how the Department of Defense can assist with defense reform efforts, NATO interoperability and border security capabilities to protect against proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). While these countries continue to focus on the challenges that remain inside their own borders, and are active in PfP, they also are making valuable contributions to global security and freedom. For example, all three have supported the US-led coalition in the Global War on Terrorism. Macedonian and Albanian troops are participating in ISAF in Afghanistan and are serving side by side with U.S. troops in Iraq. Macedonian forces are deployed with the First Infantry Division

in North Central Iraq, and Albanian forces are stationed in the North in the Mosul area. In October 2002 Croatia intercepted the Boka Star, a ship that was transporting military items to countries of concern. In early 2003, Croatia deployed military police to participate in the ISAF mission in Afghanistan. This initial six month rotation has been renewed three times. Croatia is also seriously considering contributing to a Provincial Reconstruction Team in Afghanistan. We hope that the Government of Croatia will sign an Article 98 agreement with the US soon.

Military to military relations between Albania, Croatia and Macedonia have been expanding, underscored by the June 16 meeting of defense ministers in Ohrid. These MAP countries have shown they are serious about their commitment to defense transformation and are prepared to join the ranks of NATO allies in tackling the security challenges of the 21st century.

Contributing to Regional Stability and International Security

Secretary Rumsfeld has remarked how much Europe and NATO have changed in the past decade. The Balkans has certainly changed dramatically in that period as well -- for the better -- but there is work still to be done. As post-communist countries, they must institute democratic reforms across the board -- the military is one important component of the larger structural changes that must take place. With our participation in NATO operations, and our bilateral military cooperation with each of the countries in the region,

we are helping them both take responsibility for their own security and make their own contributions to peace in Europe and the world.