

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE CHUCK HAGEL
REMARKS AT THE WOODROW WILSON INTERNATIONAL CENTER
WASHINGTON, D.C.
FRIDAY, MAY 2, 2014

Thank you, Jane.

Jane Harman and I have worked together for many years. Her exceptional dedication, ability, and judgment serve the Woodrow Wilson Center well. She is a gifted leader, but most importantly, an extraordinary human being. I also appreciate her service on the Secretary's Defense Policy Board.

Thank you for the opportunity to be here today and participate in the Wilson Center's Forum on NATO Expansion and European Security after the Cold War. The challenges facing NATO today remind us of the enduring need for this historic alliance and what we must do to strengthen it.

NATO's Enduring Purpose

Sixty-five years in August, after a long debate about America's role in a post-war world, eleven envoys gathered in the Oval Office at the White House to witness President Truman formally accept the ratification of the North Atlantic Treaty.

In doing so, President Truman broke with prominent voices – such as George Kennan's – that called for America to relieve "ourselves gradually of the basic responsibility for the security of western Europe."

Instead, General Eisenhower arrived in Paris in 1951 as the Supreme Allied Commander Europe. By 1953, 11 U.S. Air Force wings, 5 Army Divisions, and 50 Navy warships had followed. Militaries of NATO nations began working together to integrate North American and European strategy, plans, and forces.

America did not make commitments abroad in search of monsters to destroy. Instead, President Truman joined the North Atlantic Treaty because he said he was convinced that NATO would serve as "a shield against aggression and the fear of aggression," and that he would deal with the "real business of government and society" at home. Truman joined the North Atlantic Treaty because it was, as he put it, a "simple document" that, "if it had existed in 1914 and in 1939... would have prevented... two world wars."

America was committed to NATO because NATO would help protect vital American interests. By reinforcing the unity of transatlantic security, NATO would ultimately protect security and prosperity here at home – a truth that endures to this day.

The Transatlantic Alliance's Clarifying Moment

On the centennial of the start of World War I, and weeks before the 70th anniversary of the Allied landing at Normandy, Russia's recent actions in Ukraine has reminded NATO of its founding purpose. It has presented a clarifying moment for the transatlantic alliance.

NATO members must demonstrate that they are as committed to their alliance as its founding members who built it 65 years ago. They must reaffirm the security guarantees at the heart of the Alliance. They must reinvigorate the unrivaled joint planning, exercises, and capabilities that are its lifeblood. And they must reaffirm that, from the Mediterranean to the Baltics, Allies are Allies. Our commitment to the security of every Ally is resolute.

integration and collaboration with allies – and in ways that will influence U.S. strategic planning and future investments.

For decades – from the early days of the Cold War – American Defense Secretaries have called on European allies to ramp up their defense investment. And in recent years, one of the biggest obstacles to Alliance investment has been a sense that the end of the Cold War ushered in an “end of history,” and an end to insecurity at least in Europe – from aggression by nation-states. Russia’s actions in Ukraine shatter that myth and usher in bracing new realities.

Even a united and deeply interconnected Europe still lives in a dangerous world. If we must continue to build a more peaceful and prosperous global order, there is no postmodern refuge immune to the threat of military force. And we cannot take for granted – even in Europe – that peace is underwritten by the credible deterrent of military power.

In the short term, the transatlantic alliance has responded to Russian provocations with strength and resolve. But over the long term, we should expect Russia to test our alliance’s purpose, stamina, and commitment. Future generations will judge whether, at this moment of challenge, we summoned the will to invest in our alliance. We must not squander this opportunity or shrink from this challenge. We will be judged harshly if we do.

NATO should also find creative ways to help nations around the world adapt collective security to a rapidly evolving global strategic landscape. Collective security is not only the anchor of the transatlantic alliance; it is also a model for emerging security institutions around the world, from Africa to the Persian Gulf to Southeast Asia. I say this having just convened a forum of ASEAN defense ministers last month, and having called for a Gulf Cooperation Council defense ministerial this year.

These institutions bring our peoples, interests, and economies closer together – serving as anchors for stability, security, and prosperity. Strengthening these regional security institutions must be a centerpiece of America’s defense policy as we continue investing in NATO. As the institutions anchor in

AS PREPARED – EMBARGOED UNTIL DELIVERY

summit of heads of state be connected America's transatlantic commitments to the “vitality of our factories and mills and shipping, of our trading centers, our farms, our little businesses,” and to our rights at home to “produce freely, trade freely, travel freely, think freely, pray freely.”

Those who doubt the value of America's commitments abroad should recall that wisdom...because the unprecedented peace and prosperity we enjoy today ~~was hard~~ and perishable. As Ike liked to say, “it takes a lot of hard work and sacrifice by a lot of people to bring about the inevitable.”

Without deep engagement with the world, America would face more conflict, not less – and on the terms of our adversaries, not our ~~own~~. That is why America's commitment to its allies – in Europe and around the world – is not a burden or a luxury. It is a necessity. And it must be unwavering.

Thank you.

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