

Committee on International Relations
Subcommittee on Europe and Emerging Threats

Statement of Chairman Elton Gallegly
The United States and NATO: Transformation and the Riga Summit

May 3, 2006

Today, the Subcommittee on Europe and Emerging Threats is holding a hearing on the United States and NATO.

The purpose of today's hearing is to assess the Administration's current policies toward NATO, and what the Administration expects the Alliance to accomplish at NATO's upcoming Summit in November of this year, in Riga, Latvia.

Since the end of the Cold War, NATO allies have sought to transform the Alliance into a more flexible and effective military organization to adjust to new security realities and to combat new threats, such as terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

NATO's Prague Summit of 2002 invited seven new nations to join the Alliance, and established the Prague Capabilities Commitment to develop military assets and capabilities, and the NATO Response Force to operationalize NATO's "transformation."

NATO's Istanbul Summit of 2004 was the first summit of all 26 NATO allies. It continued the Alliance's efforts toward transformation, and especially sought to enhance NATO's relationships with its partners and other countries, particularly the countries of the broader Middle East.

In the run-up to the Riga Summit at the end of this year, it is important that we focus on what is most essential for the purposes of continuing the transformation of NATO. This means improving its capabilities and operational effectiveness, and enhancing its global partnerships so that the Alliance may be able to operate and conduct missions wherever it may be called upon to do so in today's world.

General Jones, the Supreme Allied Commander, recently said that 2006 may be "the most important year in the history of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization." The purpose of this hearing is to consider the implications of that statement, and what it means as we prepare for the Riga Summit of 2006.

I look forward to the testimony of our two witnesses, and I will now turn to Mr. Wexler for any remarks he may wish to make.