

Statement of the Honorable Walter B. Slocombe
Under Secretary of Defense for Policy
To the Senate Armed Services Committee
Hearing on the Military Implications of NATO's Strategic Concept
October 28, 1999

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, I am honored to return to this Committee to discuss NATO and the role that this vital institution will play as we enter the next century.

1999 has been a watershed year for NATO. In the past year, NATO added three new members, decisively met a strategic and humanitarian challenge in Kosovo and continued to work to stabilize the Balkans, began to build the relationship between NATO and the European Union through the European Security and Defense Identity (ESDI), and approved a new strategic concept, the subject of today's hearing.

My basic message this morning -- and the reason the United States supported the development of an updated strategic concept at the April NATO summit -- is that the United States has a vital interest in insuring that NATO, the most successful and enduring multinational alliance in history, continues to be a strong and effective instrument of Atlantic security in the conditions we will face in the coming years. The new strategic concept is a key means of serving that interest, for it will help ensure NATO continues to be able to fulfill its purpose -- serving as the principal foundation for collectively protecting the security of its members in North America and Europe. The document approved at the summit neither creates new obligations nor changes NATO's historic purpose. What it does do is set forth a framework for advancing that purpose in the new circumstances that will exist in the coming years by insuring that NATO adapts to meet the dramatically new conditions and challenges we face.

The strategic concept adopted this year was evolutionary, not revolutionary. It did not change our commitment to collective defense, instead we affirmed it. But we also recognized that effective collective defense requires measures different from those designed in the Cold War and its immediate aftermath. Accordingly, in the new concept, we updated our assessment of the threats, and adapted our philosophy of the capabilities and strategies needed to meet them.

The Function of the NATO Strategic Concept:

The Treaty requires that the North Atlantic Council -- the assembly of representatives of all the allies -- and the Military Committee -- the analogous body of allied military representatives "shall recommend measures for the

implementation" of the Treaty. NATO has had a strategic concept document since the Alliance was established. Indeed, according to Dean Acheson's memoirs, the first one was prepared in response to US congressional concern that there should be agreed recommendations for an integrated defense before US support funds were released. The 1999 strategic concept is the fifth NATO has adopted.

From the beginning, the function of the NATO strategic concept documents has been to set the broad policy framework for NATO's work: identifying the challenges and threats facing the alliance, outlining the military and political strategy by which the alliance will meet them, and laying down the general principles governing allied force requirements and military planning. In short, the strategic concept provides general political and military guidance to NATO planners so that forces are properly equipped and structured to meet the challenges that NATO might face.

That there have been periodic revisions to the strategic concept reflects the fact that as the security situation in Europe has changed, NATO has needed to adapt its plans and approaches to meet those evolving challenges. That is what the 1999 version does -- adapt NATO's strategies to the circumstances NATO is likely to face in the coming years.

NATO's Purposes Unchanged:

The strategic concept is a means for the parties to achieve the goals of the Washington Treaty. The successive strategic concepts have simply laid out the current concept for implementing the Alliance's enduring purposes, as set forth in the Treaty. NATO is not a static organization. It remains vigilant against new threats and the strategic concept is an important element of the effort to identify and plan for the most likely common threats to security. The Treaty, not the new strategic concept or any of its predecessors, sets the only legal obligations of the United States regarding NATO and provides for these obligations to be "carried out in accordance with [each ally's] respective constitutional processes."

While the context and challenges have changed, what has not changed – and certainly was not changed last April – is the fact that NATO is first and foremost a military alliance. Its core function is and will remain, in the words of Article 3 of the Treaty, to "maintain and develop [the allies'] individual and collective capacity to resist armed attack." For most of its history, the chief threat was direct Soviet attack on the territory of members. That threat was addressed by Article 5, the heart of the Treaty, which declares "The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them... shall be considered an attack against them all" and that each ally will assist those attacked by "such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force."

After the Cold War, direct invasion is much less likely, but less direct threats remain and have, if anything, grown, and it is both appropriate and necessary that the alliance adapt accordingly. During the Cold War, NATO focused on Article 5 threats, an attack on the territory of a member, because that was what threatened the alliance. This is much less likely now. Therefore, in our strategic concept, since 1991 NATO has looked at non-Article 5 threats as the most pressing. That focus, however, is fully consistent with the Treaty. For the authors of the Treaty did not confine the alliance only to responding to direct invasion of allied territory. Instead, the Treaty recognizes that challenges other than direct attack can also threaten the security of members and provides, in Article 4, for the parties to consult whenever any of the parties judges that the territorial integrity, political independence, or security, of any ally is threatened. Indeed, historically, it has been the US that has emphasized that NATO must concern itself with "out of area" threats, as well as direct defense of NATO territory.

No New US Obligations:

The strategic concept does not create new obligations beyond those stated in the Treaty or commit the US to take any particular action.

The strategic concept is a policy document, not a legal one. The planning for which it provides is a prudent military activity and implies no obligation to employ the plans that result.

As has always been the case, actual decisions on NATO action are not automatic -- and certainly not embedded in the strategic concept document -- but rather are taken at the time and by consensus among all allies. Indeed, the Treaty explicitly declares that its provisions will be "carried out by the Parties in accordance with their respective constitutional processes."

NATO remains an organization of sovereign nation states, and no member can be compelled to participate in a military operation that it does not support.

If a crisis arises that might be thought to call for a NATO response, the United States will be as free as it would be without the strategic concept to decide whether or not to support or join in NATO action. What the strategic concept does is increase the chances that if the United States does want NATO to act, the Alliance will be ready to do so effectively.

The 1991 Strategic Concept:

The first NATO strategic concept was agreed to in 1950; the concept document has been revised in 1957, 1968, 1991, and again this year. Only the last two have been public documents; the previous ones were classified.

The successive revisions have adapted the means for carrying out the Alliance's purposes to changing conditions. The evolutionary and adaptive character of the strategic concept document is clear from considering the 1991 document, because, although much of the 1991 strategic concept is now badly outdated, the key changes in the 1999 strategic concept were foreshadowed in 1991. As the Soviet Empire dissolved, NATO moved away from the forward deployed, fixed, defenses against direct Soviet attack that it had sustained during the Cold War, and adopted a reinforcement strategy that relied on mobility and flexibility and anticipated threats from regional conflicts and weapons of mass destruction delivered by terrorists, or rogue states.

The 1991 strategic concept stated:

The primary role of Alliance military forces, to guarantee the security and territorial integrity of member states, remains unchanged. But this role must take account of the new strategic environment, in which a single massive and global threat has given way to diverse and multi-directional risks.
(Paragraph 4.)

It declared that "NATO must be capable of responding to such risks if stability in Europe and the security of the Alliance members are to be preserved." (Paragraph 8.)

The 1991 strategic concept also stated:

Risks to Allied security are less likely to result from calculated aggression against the territory of the Allies, but rather from the adverse consequences of instabilities that may arise from the serious economic, social and political difficulties, including ethnic rivalries and territorial disputes, which are faced by many countries in central and eastern Europe.
(Paragraph 9.)

It explicitly stated that “Further adaptation will be made to the extent necessary.” (Paragraph 6.)

The 1999 Strategic Concept:

The 1999 strategic concept builds on the 1991 document, eliminating obsolete references to balancing the power of the Soviet Union and sharpening the focus on the new tasks already identified in 1991. The strategic concept maintains the commitment of the Alliance to achieve a credible capability for collective self-defense as a core mission, but it also lays out a strategy for meeting other challenges. This ensures that NATO has the means, as well as the doctrine, to deal with the full range of security challenges.

The basic content of the 1999 strategic concept is simply summarized:

- Recognition that, although the general security of the Euro-Atlantic region has improved and large-scale conventional aggression against allied territory is highly unlikely (though not to be discounted entirely), uncertainties and risks remain; including instability and crises on the periphery of the alliance, arising from ethnic rivalries, territorial disputes, and internal crises: the proliferation of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons and the means to deliver them: terrorism: potential disruption of vital resources: and uncontrolled movements of people in response to humanitarian and other crises.
- Acknowledgment that, besides armed attack on allied territory, the Alliance must take account of the broader global context in which new threats exist and employ alliance consultation and coordination to meet them.
- Reaffirmation of the enduring purpose of safeguarding allies' security by both political and military means, and of fundamental NATO principals of the transatlantic link, mutual commitment and cooperation, and the indivisibility of security.
- Identification of NATO's fundamental security tasks as the means of achieving the Alliance's essential purpose: security, consultation, and the ability to deter and defend against any threat of aggression against any ally.
- Adaptation of two new fundamental tasks to enhance security and stability, one by partnership with nations in the region outside the alliance, and the other by readiness to contribute – on a case-by-case basis – to crisis prevention and crisis management, including crisis response operations. These

tasks rest on the principle that by dealing with crises at an early stage it is more likely that risks can be kept low and at a distance.

- Specification of an approach to security in the coming century, comprising preservation of the transatlantic link; maintenance of military capabilities for the full range of foreseeable circumstances from direct territorial defense to conflict prevention and crisis response; the development within NATO of a European Security and Defense Identity that will allow the European allies to assume greater responsibilities; partnership, cooperation and dialogue with NATO's neighbors; openness to new members willing and able to assume the responsibilities of the alliance; and the role for arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation measures.

- Establishment of guidelines for the Alliance's forces, to insure that the Alliance will maintain the necessary military capabilities to accomplish the full range of its missions. Among the elements required:

- Ability to conduct a successful Article 5 defense against a direct attack on any ally.

- Ability to contribute to crisis prevention and crisis response operations.

- Maintaining the principle of shared burdens, including by the presence of US conventional and nuclear forces in Europe and by measures, including ESDI, whereby the European allies can enhance their contributions.

- Maintenance and modernization of the essential tools of collective defense, including the integrated military structure, collective force and operational planning, promotion of interoperability, and other concrete measures for common defense.

- Continued deployment of an appropriate mix of conventional and nuclear forces, recognizing that nuclear forces retain a key role in deterrence, though greatly reduced numerically and in NATO's reliance on them.

- Cooperation with partner countries, including Russia and Ukraine, as well as Mediterranean nations.

- Establishment of key force planning guidelines, to insure that alliance forces are adequate in strength and capabilities to deter and counter aggression and respond to crises, including beyond the Alliance's territory. The concept document lays out principles for force size, geographical distribution,

command structure, maintenance of the nuclear elements of NATO's posture, and a range of specific required operational capabilities. Importantly, these reflect the urgent need to improve readiness, deployability, effective C³, engagement capability, sustainability and survivability (including against WMD or terrorist threats).

- The strategic concept states the obvious point that NATO's crises response activity must be consistent with international law, but significantly, does not suggest that NATO must have permission from the United Nations or any other outside body before it can act.

Thus, the strategic concept document gives the Alliance a framework on which to base its planning efforts so that it is better prepared to respond to new challenges in the future.

Compatibility with US requirements:

The strategic concept closely parallels US doctrine and US policy regarding what NATO needs to be prepared to do. In particular, the focus on the need to improve NATO forces' mobility, effective engagement, survivability, effective C³ and sustainability tracks exactly with the Defense Capabilities Initiative advanced by the United States. The reaffirmation that nuclear weapons retain a critical, though relatively reduced, role in NATO doctrine was a major US goal.

The provisions dealing with the European Security and Defense Identity reflect both our support for a greater European contribution to collective defense and our recognition of the legitimacy of European desires for a European capacity to act where NATO is not engaged militarily and our concern that this increased European focus on and capability for defense be fully consistent with and supportive of NATO and US interests and equities.

Crisis Response Capabilities:

Finally, the parts of the strategic concept having to do with crisis response operations match US interests. While capability for Article 5 territorial defense must be maintained -- and the strategic concept provides for this -- the fact is that other challenges are more likely under current and reasonably foreseeable conditions. An alliance that attempted to stay focused only on Article 5 defense would not be fulfilling its purpose or serving our interests, because it would be an alliance leaving unaddressed most of the range of relevant threats.

The US has a strong interest in improving Alliance capabilities to deal with the newer challenges of crisis response. The Kosovo operation highlighted

shortcomings in this regard. The strategic concept formally establishes a NATO requirement to prepare to meet these needs and set up a framework of priorities for doing so. Better European capabilities means a greater potential to contribute when crisis response is required in our common interest, and therefore a lesser burden on US forces. Far from increasing US military requirements, implementation of the program of force improvements laid out in the strategic concept and the Defense Capabilities Initiative, would tend to ease those requirements.

Of course, to recognize that NATO faces these challenges and should be prepared to meet them is not to say in advance that NATO should necessarily respond to any particular crisis by deploying military forces. The requirement for consensus for any NATO military operation continues to apply fully to crisis response operations. We were successful in making clear that it is the alliance, and not any other body -- the UN, OSCE, PJC or whatever -- whose decision is required. And that such a decision would be taken by consensus of all NATO allies -- including, of course, the United States -- to approve any military action by the Alliance. The strategic concept establishes a path whereby when a consensus, including the United States, for action exists, NATO will be better able to carry out the mission.

Senate Conditions Met:

Condition (1) (A) of the resolution of ratification of the Protocols to the North Atlantic Treaty of 1949 on the Accession of Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic lists ten principles to guide the revision of the 1991 strategic concept of NATO. The United States successfully ensured these principals were maintained in the updated strategic concept. The principles are summarized below together with quotations from selected sources to indicate how they are reflected in the 1999 strategic concept and related areas.

(i) NATO is first and foremost a military alliance.

The 1999 revision of the strategic concept, paragraph 6, reads:

“NATO’s essential and enduring purpose, set out in the Washington Treaty, is to safeguard the freedom and security of all its members by political and military means.”

Also, paragraph 24 of the 1999 concept reads:

“Any armed attack on the territory of the Allies, from whatever direction, would be covered by Articles 5 and 6 of the Washington Treaty.”

The revised concept, paragraph 4 notes:

The Alliance “must **safeguard common security interests**... It must **maintain collective defense** and reinforce the transatlantic link ... It must, above all, **maintain** the political will and **military means** required....” (Emphasis added.)

(ii) NATO serves as the principal foundation for collectively defending the security interests of its members against external threats.

One of the fundamental tasks of NATO, as specified in the 1991 strategic concept and included in the 1999 revision, is:

“To deter and defend against any threat of aggression against any NATO member state as provided for in Articles 5 and 6 of the Washington Treaty.”

Also, the revised concept, paragraph 25, notes:

“NATO remains the essential forum for consultation among the Allies and the forum for agreement on policies bearing on the security and defence commitments of its members under the Washington Treaty.”

(iii) Strong US leadership of NATO promotes and protects US vital national security interests.

NATO’s 50th Anniversary Summit was held in Washington.

Most of the initiatives for the Summit were proposed by the U.S., including a defense capabilities initiative (DCI), a weapons of mass destruction (WMD) initiative, a Membership Action Plan (MAP), and enhanced Partnership arrangements.

(iv) The US maintains its leadership role by stationing US forces in Europe, providing commanders for key NATO commands, and through the presence of U.S. nuclear forces in Europe.

US forces remain in Europe, General Clark is SACEUR, and US nuclear weapons are dedicated to SACEUR. The United States has also demonstrated leadership in NATO’s efforts to stabilize the Balkans.

(v) NATO members will face common threats to their security, including:

(I) potential re-emergence of a hegemonic power.

The 1999 revision of the strategic concept, paragraph 20, reads:

“Notwithstanding ... the fact that large-scale conventional aggression against the Alliance is highly unlikely, the possibility of such a threat emerging over the longer term exists.”

Paragraph 53f goes on to state:

“[T]he Alliance must be able to build up larger forces, both in response to any fundamental changes in the security environment and for limited requirements, by reinforcement, by mobilising reserves, or by reconstitution forces when necessary.”

(II) rogue states and non-state actors with NBC weapons and delivery means.

The revised strategic concept, paragraph 21, reads:

“The existence of powerful nuclear forces outside the Alliance also constitutes a significant factor which the Alliance has to take into account...”

In addition, paragraph 22 of the 1999 revision reads:

“The proliferation of NBC weapons and their means of delivery remains a matter of serious concern. ... Some states, including on NATO’s periphery and in other regions, sell or acquire or try to acquire NBC weapons and delivery means. ... Non-state actors have shown the potential to create and use some of these weapons.”

(III) threats of a wider nature, including disruption of the flow of vital resources and other possible transnational threats.

The 1999 revision of the strategic concept, paragraph 24, reads:

“Alliance security interests can be affected by other risks of a wider nature, including acts of terrorism, sabotage and organized crime, and by the disruption of the flow of vital resources. The uncontrolled movement of large numbers of people, particularly as a result of armed conflicts, can also pose problems for security and stability affecting the Alliance.”

(IV) conflict stemming from ethnic and religious enmity, the revival of historic disputes, or the actions of undemocratic leaders.

The 1999 revision of the strategic concept, paragraph 20, reads:

“Some countries ... face serious economic, social and political difficulties. Ethnic and religious rivalries, territorial disputes, inadequate or failed efforts at reform, the abuse of human rights, and the dissolution of states can lead to local and even regional instability. The resulting tensions could lead to crises affecting Euro-Atlantic stability, to human suffering, and to armed conflicts. Such conflicts could affect the security of the Alliance by spilling over into neighboring countries, including NATO countries...”

(vi) ...a credible capability for collective self-defense ... remains the core mission of NATO.

The 1999 revision of the strategic concept, paragraph 53 (d), reads:

“...overall, the Alliance will, in both the near and long term and for the full range of its missions, require essential operational capabilities such as an effective engagement capability; deployability and mobility; survivability of forces and infrastructure; and sustainability, incorporating logistics and force rotation.... Sufficient capabilities in the areas of command, control and communications as well as intelligence and surveillance will serve as necessary force multipliers.”

As noted in Secretary Cohen’s letter to Chairman Warner on March 24, 1999:

“...to ensure that the Alliance has the means, as well as the doctrine, to deal with the full range of possible challenges, the United States has pushed forward in NATO a Defense Capabilities Initiative to improve the Alliance’s capabilities for mobility, precision engagement, sustainability, and survivability.”

(vii) Capacity to respond to common threats.... This will require that NATO members possess national military capabilities to rapidly deploy forces over long distances, sustain operations for extended periods of time, and operate jointly with the U.S....

Paragraph 52 of the concept states:

“The size, readiness, availability and deployment of the Alliance’s military forces will reflect its commitment to collective defense and to conduct crisis response operations, sometimes at short notice, distant from their home stations, including beyond the Allies’ territory.... Alliance forces must be adequate in strength and capabilities to deter and counter aggression against any Ally. They must be interoperable and have appropriate doctrines and technologies. They must be held at the required readiness and deployability, and be capable of military success in a wide range of complex joint and combined operations, which may also include Partners and other non-NATO nations.”

(viii) The Integrated Military Structure of NATO underpins NATO’s effectiveness as a military alliance.

Paragraph 53c states:

“NATO’s command structure will be able to undertake command and control of the full range of the Alliance’s military missions including through the use of deployable combined and joint HQs, in particular CJTF headquarters, to command and control multinational and multiservice forces.”

(ix) Nuclear weapons will continue to make an essential contribution to deterring aggression.

NATO’s nuclear posture, as stated in the 1991 strategic concept, will remain unchanged. (Paragraphs 62-64 of the 1999 revision.)

(x) Burdensharing.

The 1999 revision, paragraph 4, notes, the Alliance must “ensure a balance that allows the European Allies to assume greater responsibility.”

Conclusion:

The strong leadership role that the United States plays continues to promote and protect the vital national security interests of the United States, for we have an interest in peace, stability, and security in Europe. Most of the initiatives for the Summit were proposed by the United States, including the defense capabilities initiative (DCI), a weapons of mass destruction initiative, and a membership action plan to help prepare nations that aspire to membership – and the key elements of the updated strategic concept.

The strategic concept document approved last April meets all the conditions the Senate set forth in its resolution of ratification regarding the admission of Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic. It provides NATO with the tools to anticipate threats and to plan how to respond to those threats. The obligations of the Treaty have not changed. What has changed is the threats that NATO will likely face.

In sum, because the Treaty identifies no enemy and protects the sovereignty of member states it is flexible enough to adjust to any security challenges. As Dean Acheson testified in 1949, “The central idea of the treaty is not a static one...” This flexibility has been fundamental to NATO’s success, and will allow the organization to remain the dominant force for stability through the next century.