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NEWS

U. S. SENATOR FOR KANSAS

FROM:

SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER

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NATO ENLARGEMENT FACILITATION ACT

DOLE INTRODUCES LEGISLATION TO EXPEDITE TRANSITION TO FULL NATO MEMBERSHIP OF EMERGING DEMOCRACIES IN CENTRAL & EASTERN EUROPE; CLINTON ADMINISTRATION'S POLICY ON NATO ENLARGEMENT -- "DELIBERATELY SLOW"

Today I will introduce the NATO Enlargement Facilitation Act. This legislation is intended to expedite the transition to full NATO membership of emerging democracies in Central and Eastern Europe. This bill builds on earlier bipartisan legislation, such as the NATO Participation Act of 1994, which reflects the strong bipartisan support for the policy of enlarging the NATO alliance.

NATO has expanded its membership on three occasions, each time enhancing security and stability in Europe. Bringing eligible Central and Eastern European nations into NATO will serve that same critical purpose.

For nearly four years, the new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe have sought to protect their freedom and independence by becoming members -- full members -- of western institutions, especially NATO. They have repeatedly petitioned for membership. Moreover, they have seized every opportunity for such association, proving their flexibility and seriousness. They have become "partners" for peace, but they desire to become real members of a real alliance.

More Inclusive Atlantic Alliance Would Respond to Security Needs

The need for a more inclusive, more effective Atlantic Alliance that would respond to present security needs has been clear at least since violent aggression began in the former Yugoslavia -- where the world witnessed the ineffective response of the United Nations, the European Community, the Western European Union, NATO and the United States.

Since that time, it became clear that the elaborate architecture of European security developed during the Cold War era was, and is, not up to the challenges of the post-Cold War world.

Window of Opportunity for Consolidation of New Freedoms Closing

Meanwhile, the window of opportunity for consolidation of new freedoms, independence and security is closing. Forging new relationships and new institutions is increasingly difficult and controversial. In my view, further delays will undermine the governments and confidence of people recently freed from the expansionist ambitions of aggressive neighbors.

Yet, the Clinton administration has acted as if time were not a factor -- as if there were no threats to the independence of the newly self-governing democracies.

Secretary Christopher in a recent speech stated that the administration's policy was "slow, but deliberate." I believe the administration's policy is deliberately slow. The Clinton administration has consistently avoided concrete steps toward NATO enlargement -- studying and discussing, but not acting.

Targeted Security Assistance for Eligible New Democracies

This legislation is designed to facilitate NATO enlargement by providing targeted security assistance for those countries most likely to become eligible to join NATO. The NATO Enlargement Facilitation Act creates a \$60 million assistance program composed of Foreign Military Financing (FMF) loan and grant programs and the International Military Education and Training (IMET) program.

This legislation declares Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic eligible for this assistance and authorizes the president to designate others as they meet the criteria in current law.

(more)

This legislation, however, does not name countries to be NATO members. That is a decision for the alliance to take. This legislation seeks to make up for time lost due to a lack of U.S. leadership.

It is also important to note that this bill signifies the beginning, not an endpoint. Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary will likely be the first countries in Central and Eastern Europe to join NATO -- not the last. Finally, this legislation should not be interpreted as a lessening of U.S. interests in close ties with other countries in the region. The freedom and security of all Europe's new democracies remain a high U.S. foreign policy priority.

I believe that the United States and NATO must act decisively -- before the window of opportunity closes. When the Bush administration was confronted with the challenge of German reunification, Western leaders swiftly reached agreement on policy and acted resolutely to achieve it.

NATO Enlargement: No Threat to Russia

As with German reunification, the Act of including Central and Eastern European democracies in NATO is not and cannot reasonably be seen as an affront -- much less a threat -- to any other country, least of all Russia. All actual and potential members of the NATO alliance share an interest in a peaceable, democratic Russia. Furthermore, the United States has a distinct national interest in a firm security relationship with Russia. Any U.S. government should, and we expect, will work cooperatively with a democratic Russia for the consolidation of security in Europe -- but not by denying NATO membership to Europe's new democracies.

NATO enlargement has enjoyed bipartisan support since the end of the Cold War. I hope that all of my colleagues will support this legislation in that same bipartisan spirit.

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