

REMARKS BY
AMBASSADOR MEL SEMBLER
U.S. AMBASSADOR TO ITALY
GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE
ATLANTIC TREATY ASSOCIATION
FRIDAY, DECEMBER 3, 2004
9:30 AM

SENATOR COLOMBO, AMBASSADOR
HUNTER, I WOULD LIKE TO THANK YOU
FOR HOSTING THIS IMPORTANT EVENT. ON
BEHALF OF PRESIDENT BUSH, I WOULD
LIKE TO CONGRATULATE THE ATLANTIC
TREATY ASSOCIATION ON THE
EXCELLENT WORK YOU HAVE DONE FOR
50 YEARS IN PROMOTING
UNDERSTANDING OF THE ATLANTIC
ALLIANCE AND BRINGING NATIONS
TOGETHER.

THE THEME OF YOUR CONFERENCE, THE FUTURE OF EURO-ATLANTIC SECURITY, IS MORE RELEVANT THAN EVER, AND I AM CONFIDENT THAT WITH YOUR CONTINUING EFFORTS AND DEDICATION WE WILL CONTINUE TO HAVE AN ALLIANCE CAPABLE OF ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGES OF THE 21ST CENTURY.

AS PRESIDENT BUSH HAS SAID, "OUR GREAT TRANSATLANTIC ALLIANCE HAS MET AND OVERCOME GREAT DANGERS IN THE PAST, AND OUR WORK IN NATO IS NOT DONE. IN THE PAST, MANY ASSUMED THAT NATO REPRESENTED A PLEDGE THAT AMERICA WOULD COME TO THE AID OF EUROPE.

TODAY, BY OUR WORDS AND BY OUR ACTIONS, WE KNOW THAT NATO MEANS MUCH MORE -- IT IS A SOLEMN COMMITMENT THAT AMERICA AND EUROPE ARE JOINED TOGETHER TO ADVANCE THE CAUSE OF FREEDOM AND PEACE."

THE ATLANTIC ALLIANCE IS AT THE HEART OF THE TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONSHIP AND THE ONE AND ONLY GUARANTOR OF EURO-ATLANTIC SECURITY. I BELIEVE THAT ROME IS THE EXACTLY RIGHT PLACE TO DISCUSS THE FUTURE OF THIS RELATIONSHIP.

ITALY IS A PILLAR OF SUPPORT FOR A RENEWED NATO AND IS DEDICATED JUST AS STRONGLY TO EUROPEAN UNITY. ROME HAS JUST HOSTED THE SIGNING OF THE EU CONSTITUTION. ITALIAN GOVERNMENTS HAVE NOT WAVERED IN THEIR WILLINGNESS TO PUT MILITARY FORCES ON THE LINE IN DEFENSE OF FREEDOM. LET US REMEMBER ITALY'S POSITIVE EXAMPLE, THEN, AS WE EVALUATE THE ISSUES CURRENTLY FACING OUR ALLIANCE.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE U.S AND EUROPE HAS BEEN TESTED BY DEBATE OVER THE WAR IN IRAQ AND, MORE BROADLY, HOW MOST EFFECTIVELY TO WAGE THE GLOBAL WAR ON TERROR. DISAGREEMENT OVER OTHER ISSUES -- SUCH AS THE ROLE OF THE UN, AND THE VIEW OF THE EU AS A COUNTERWEIGHT TO U.S. POWER -- HAS FURTHER MUDDIED THE WATERS. HOWEVER, AS MINISTER MARTINO SAID, WE ARE ALLIES BECAUSE WE ARE FRIENDS, AND NOT FRIENDS BECAUSE WE ARE ALLIES.

IT IS NORMAL - AND, I WOULD ARGUE,
EVEN HEALTHY - FOR FRIENDS TO
DISAGREE FROM TIME TO TIME, BUT WE
DON'T DISAGREE OVER ONE
FUNDAMENTAL POINT - THAT NATO
REMAINS THE MOST VITAL FORCE FOR
TRANSATLANTIC SECURITY SINCE WORLD
WAR II.

DESPITE OUR DISAGREEMENTS, I BELIEVE
THERE IS A REAL CHANCE FOR
TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONS TO
IMPROVE IN THE COMING YEAR, AND
NATO CAN PLAY A PIVOTAL ROLE IN THIS
PROCESS.

THE RE-ELECTION OF PRESIDENT BUSH PRESENTS AN OPPORTUNITY TO MEND RELATIONS BETWEEN THE U.S. AND EUROPE. ALREADY, THE PRESIDENT HAS SENT A STRONG AND POSITIVE SIGNAL BY CHOOSING HIS FIRST TWO POST-ELECTION MEETINGS TO BE WITH NATO'S SECRETARY GENERAL JAAP DE HOOP SCHEFFER AND BRITISH PRIME MINISTER TONY BLAIR. IN A FEW DAYS I WILL TRAVEL TO WASHINGTON WITH PRIME MINISTER BERLUSCONI FOR HIS MEETING WITH PRESIDENT BUSH.

THE STRONG PUBLIC STATEMENTS TO
EMERGE FROM THESE MEETINGS,
CONFIRMING THE BEDROCK ROLE OF NATO
IN TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONS AND
RENEWING OUR COMMITMENT TO MOVE
FORWARD WITH THE MIDDLE EAST PEACE
PROCESS, DEMONSTRATE OUR
WILLINGNESS TO WORK WITH OUR ALLIES
TO BRING ABOUT A MORE PEACEFUL AND
SECURE WORLD.

THE GRIM PREDICTIONS BY PUNDITS IN BOTH EUROPE AND THE U.S. THAT THE TRANSATLANTIC PARTNERSHIP, AND EVEN NATO ITSELF, ARE ON THE BRINK OF A SEPARATION OR DIVORCE ARE WILDLY PREMATURE AND NOT AT ALL SUPPORTED BY A CLOSER INSPECTION OF POST-WAR U.S.-EUROPEAN RELATIONS.

AFTER ALL, **THE** DEBATE OVER THE IRAQ WAR IS NOT A UNIQUE EVENT IN THE HISTORY OF THE ALLIANCE. REMEMBER SUEZ, VIETNAM, THE DEPLOYMENT OF PERSHING MISSILES IN THE '80S, AND OUR BIG DISAGREEMENTS OVER BOSNIA A DECADE AGO. ALL WERE TOUTED AS EVIDENCE IN YEARS PAST THAT NATO WAS ON THE VERGE OF A BREAK UP.

IT DIDN'T HAPPEN THEN AND IT WILL NOT HAPPEN NOW. SINCE NATO'S INCEPTION, THE TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONSHIP HAS BEEN CHARACTERIZED BY UPS AND DOWNS. WE ARE, AFTER ALL, NOT THE WARSAW PACT, REQUIRING A RIGID ORTHODOXY OF THOUGHT, BUT RATHER AN ALLIANCE OF DEMOCRACIES GOVERNED BY CONSENSUS WITH THE RIGHT TO INDEPENDENT AND CRITICAL THOUGHT. AT EACH OF THESE CRISIS POINTS, NATO UNITY HAS BENT BUT NOT BROKEN, AND WE HAVE EMERGED STRONGER FOR THE CHALLENGES AHEAD.

I PREDICT THE SAME RENEWED UNITY IN 2005, AS WE ALL AGREE TO PUT THE IRAQ DEBATE TO REST AND FOCUS INSTEAD ON SUPPORTING THE FIRST DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS IN THAT COUNTRY'S MEMORY.

BOTH SIDES OF THE ATLANTIC NEED TO MAKE A STRONG AND SUSTAINED EFFORT TO OVERCOME THE DIVISIONS OF THE PAST. WE NEED TO AVOID UNHELPFUL RHETORIC AND INSTEAD REALLY LISTEN.

WE NEED TO PUT FORWARD A UNITED FRONT TO DEMONSTRATE OUR COLLECTIVE WILLINGNESS TO SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF A STABLE, DEMOCRATIC, AND PROSPEROUS IRAQ, REGARDLESS OF NATIONAL ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE WAR ITSELF. AS FORMER NATO SECRETARY GENERAL LORD ROBERTSON WROTE A FEW WEEKS BACK, THE QUESTION POSED TO OUR ALLIES WHO WILL NOT SEND TROOPS OR HAVE WITHDRAWN TROOPS MUST BE: "WHAT IS YOUR PLAN IF IRAQ FAILS?" THE STAKES ARE ENORMOUSLY HIGH, AND WE NEED OUR ALLIES TO STEP UP AND COMMIT.

FOR NATO, THIS MEANS A CONCERTED EFFORT TO GET ITS IRAQ TRAINING MISSION FULLY OPERATIONAL BEFORE JANUARY ELECTIONS. HERE, AGAIN, I'D LIKE TO THANK ITALY AND THE OTHER COUNTRIES THAT HAVE "STEPPED UP TO THE PLATE," AS WE SAY IN BASEBALL, FOR THIS IMPORTANT TASK.

IN AFGHANISTAN, WE NEED TO BUILD ON THE SUCCESS OF LAST MONTH'S ELECTION.

THE NATO-LED INTERNATIONAL SECURITY ASSISTANCE FORCE (ISAF) MUST MOVE INTO WESTERN AFGHANISTAN AND ESTABLISH ADDITIONAL PROVINCIAL RECONSTRUCTION TEAMS (PRTS) TO HELP EXTEND THE REACH AND AUTHORITY OF THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT. AS THIS EXPANSION PROCEEDS, WE ALSO NEED TO LOOK CLOSELY AT BRINGING OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM AND ISAF TOGETHER UNDER A UNIFIED NATO COMMAND, AS SECRETARY OF DEFENSE RUMSFELD SUGGESTED AT THE NATO INFORMAL DEFENSE MINISTERIAL IN ROMANIA.

AT SOME POINT, IT WILL NO LONGER BE POSSIBLE -- OR DESIRABLE -- TO MAINTAIN TWO SEPARATE MILITARY OPERATIONS IN AFGHANISTAN, ESPECIALLY AS THE OEF AND ISAF BEGIN WORKING IN THE SAME AREAS OF THE COUNTRY.

WE NEED TO STAY ACTIVE IN THE BALKANS, WHERE THE U.S. AND EUROPE HAVE WORKED TOGETHER SO EFFECTIVELY TO STABILIZE BOSNIA AND STOP THE FIGHTING AND REPRESSION IN KOSOVO. PRIMARILY, THIS MEANS STAYING THE COURSE IN KOSOVO, WHERE PEACE IS STILL FRAGILE.

THE KEY LESSON LEARNED FROM THE VIOLENCE LAST MARCH IS THAT TROOPS PARTICIPATING IN ALL NATO MISSIONS MUST BE PREPARED TO UNDERTAKE TASKS SUCH AS CROWD AND RIOT CONTROL, AND NOT HAMSTRUNG BY NATIONAL CAVEATS LIMITING THEIR ROLE. WE HAVE TO MAKE SURE THAT NATO DECISIONS ARE FOLLOWED UP BY ACTIONS, AND THAT NATO COMMANDERS HAVE THE TOOLS NEEDED TO CARRY OUT THEIR MISSIONS.

NATO MUST STRENGTHEN ITS PARTNERSHIPS WITH NON-NATO COUNTRIES.

THROUGH THE NATO-RUSSIA COUNCIL,
RUSSIA IS EMERGING AS PERHAPS NATO'S
MOST IMPORTANT AND POWERFUL
PARTNER IN THE GLOBAL WAR ON
TERRORISM. AND NATO'S OUTREACH
THROUGH THE PARTNERSHIP FOR PEACE
TO THE CAUCASUS AND CENTRAL ASIA IS
HELPING THE COUNTRIES OF THOSE
REGIONS UNDERTAKE NEEDED POLITICAL
AND DEFENSE REFORMS. NATO CAN PLAY
A ROLE IN ESTABLISHING PERHAPS THE
GREATEST DETERRENT TO WOULD-BE
TERRORISTS: STABLE, SECURE, AND
ACCOUNTABLE GOVERNMENTS.

IN THIS SAME VEIN, NATO ALSO NEEDS TO EXPAND ITS OUTREACH TO THE ARAB STATES AND ISRAEL. THE U.S. BELIEVES THAT NATO CAN ADD VALUE AS ONE OF THE KEY INSTRUMENTS FOR OUR LONG-TERM ENGAGEMENT IN THIS IMPORTANT REGION. THIS IS THE LOGIC BEHIND THE ISTANBUL COOPERATION INITIATIVE, THE ALLIANCE'S EFFORT TO REACH BEYOND OUR PARTNERS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN DIALOGUE TO OTHER STATES OF THE BROADER MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA.

FINALLY, NATO MUST CONTINUE ITS TRANSFORMATION INTO A MORE AGILE, FLEXIBLE FIGHTING FORCE THAT IS CAPABLE OF MEETING 21ST CENTURY SECURITY CHALLENGES. THIS PROCESS IS WELL UNDERWAY: NATO HAS ADOPTED A LEANER AND MORE FLEXIBLE COMMAND STRUCTURE, AND CREATED A NEW ALLIANCE TRANSFORMATION COMMAND IN NORFOLK, VIRGINIA --PLUGGING EUROPEAN ALLIES INTO CUTTING-EDGE CHANGES IN TECHNOLOGY AND DOCTRINE IN THE U.S.

WHILE WE MOVE FORWARD ON ALL OF THESE FRONTS, WE ALSO NEED TO KEEP A CLOSE EYE ON TWO MAJOR FAULT LINES THAT, IF LEFT UNATTENDED, COULD PLACE A DAMAGING LONG-TERM STRAIN ON THE ALLIANCE.

THE FIRST OF THESE IS THE CAPABILITY GAP. NATO MUST BE ABLE TO PROJECT ITS FORCES WELL OUTSIDE OF EUROPE WHEREVER THEY ARE NEEDED IN OUR INCREASINGLY DANGEROUS WORLD. AS NATO SECRETARY GENERAL DE HOOP SCHEFFER SUCCINCTLY PUT IT: "WE MUST MAKE SURE THAT OUR MEANS MATCH OUR AMBITIONS. THERE SIMPLY IS NO OTHER CHOICE."

NATO'S MULTILATERAL FORCE
STRUCTURE HAS ONE DECIDED
ADVANTAGE OVER "COALITIONS OF THE
WILLING" -- INTEROPERABILITY. TO BE
ABLE TO WORK AND DEPLOY TOGETHER
WITH GREATER SPEED, EFFECTIVENESS,
AND RELIABILITY, HOWEVER, NATO
MEMBERS MUST STANDARDIZE THEIR
EQUIPMENT, LANGUAGE, TACTICS, AND
PROCEDURES - ALL OF WHICH COSTS
MONEY. WHILE THE U.S. WILL SPEND OVER
\$400 BILLION ON DEFENSE THIS YEAR, THE
25 OTHER NATO MEMBERS COMBINED
WILL SPEND LESS THAN HALF OF THAT.

IF OUR EUROPEAN ALLIES CONTINUE TO SPEND SO LITTLE ON DEFENSE, THEY SIMPLY WON'T BE ABLE TO KEEP UP WITH THE U.S. IN THE AIR, ON THE SEA, OR ON LAND.

IN ADDITION TO THE TECHNOLOGY GAP BETWEEN US, THERE IS AN EVEN MORE CRITICAL "USABILITY GAP." OF EUROPE'S 2.4 MILLION MEN AND WOMEN IN UNIFORM, ONLY ROUGHLY THREE PERCENT CAN NOW BE DEPLOYED ON OUR PRIORITY MISSIONS IN THE BALKANS, AFGHANISTAN, AND IRAQ. BY CONTRAST, THIRTY PERCENT OF ACTIVE US ARMY PERSONNEL ARE CURRENTLY DEPLOYED OVERSEAS.

IT DOES US NO GOOD TO SPEND MONEY
ON FORCES IF WE CANNOT USE THEM
WHERE THEY ARE NEEDED.

THE OTHER MAJOR POTENTIAL FAULT
LINE RUNS THROUGH NATO'S EVOLVING
RELATIONSHIP WITH THE EU. A HEALTHY
TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONSHIP
DEMANDS A CLOSE AND PRODUCTIVE
PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO GREAT
INSTITUTIONS RESPONSIBLE FOR
EUROPE'S FUTURE, A PARTNERSHIP
BASED ON COMPLEMENTARITY AND
COOPERATION RATHER THAN ON
RIVALRY AND COMPETITION.

A FEW LEADERS ON THE CONTINENT
HAVE CALLED FOR THE EUROPEAN
UNION TO ADOPT A LONG-TERM
STRATEGY TO BECOME A
COUNTERWEIGHT TO THE U.S. THAT, IN
MY VIEW, WOULD BE THE VERY
ANTITHESIS OF THE TRANSATLANTIC
COMMUNITY WE HAVE BEEN BUILDING
TOGETHER SINCE THE END OF THE
SECOND WORLD WAR. SUCH A REVERSAL
WOULD AMOUNT TO A COLOSSAL
STRATEGIC ERROR.

IT WOULD REPUDIATE THE PRIMARY FACTOR THAT HAS PRODUCED TWO GENERATIONS OF PEACE AND UNPARALLELED SECURITY, PROSPERITY, AND UNITY IN EUROPE -- THE COMMITMENT OF THE UNITED STATES TO THE DEFENSE OF THIS CONTINENT, AND THE EXISTENCE OF NATO.

OUR GOAL FOR THE COMING MONTHS AND YEARS SHOULD BE NOTHING LESS THAN A NEW, 21ST CENTURY STRATEGIC ALLIANCE BETWEEN THE U.S. AND EUROPE, ONE BASED ON THE TWIN PILLARS OF A RENEWED AND REJUVENATED NATO AND INCREASINGLY STRONGER U.S.-EU TIES.

TOGETHER, THE U.S. AND EUROPE CAN
BE A POTENT FORCE FOR GLOBAL
PROSPERITY AND STABILITY.

IN PRESIDENT KENNEDY'S WORDS, NATO
ALLIES MUST CONTINUE TO BE THE
"WATCHMEN ON THE WALLS OF WORLD
FREEDOM," ESPECIALLY AS WE TAKE ON
THE NEW CHALLENGES OF OUR TIME. I AM
OPTIMISTIC THAT THIS 55-YEAR OLD
ALLIANCE CAN PLAY A DECISIVE ROLE IN
DEFEATING THE SPECTER OF GLOBAL
TERRORISM, IN EXTENDING THE ZONE OF
PEACE AND SECURITY TO NEW REGIONS,
AND STRENGTHENING IT WITHIN EUROPE.

TO DO ALL OF THIS, WE WILL NEED TO
WORK TOGETHER MORE EFFECTIVELY TO
OVERCOME OUR DIFFERENCES, AND TO
RECOGNIZE THE STRENGTH OF OUR
COLLECTIVE TRANSATLANTIC BOND. THE
ATLANTIC TREATY ASSOCIATION CAN
HELP US IN THESE EFFORTS, AND
TOGETHER, THROUGH A UNIFIED NATO,
WE CAN CONTINUE TO ENSURE THAT NOT
ONLY THE EURO-ATLANTIC AREA IS
SECURE, BUT THAT OUR TRANSATLANTIC
RELATIONSHIP CAN HELP BRING PEACE
AND SECURITY TO OTHER PARTS OF THE
WORLD AS WELL.

THANK YOU.