

NATO Survival

Statement by Colonel Patrick Warren

SECTION I – INTRODUCTION

AMBASSADOR PIFER, DISTINGUISHED GUESTS, IT IS QUITE AN HONOR TO BE ABLE TO DISCUSS MY WORK WITH YOU TODAY. THANK YOU FOR ATTENDING.

I HAD THE PRIVILEGE OF SERVING AT NATO's – MILITARY HEADQUARTERS (SHAPE) IN BELGIUM, FOR THE PAST THREE YEARS.

DURING THAT TENURE AT THERE I OBSERVED THE STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF THE ALLIANCE – AND FROM MY PERSPECTIVE IT HAS PLENTY OF BOTH.

THE GENESIS OF MY RESEARCH STEMS FROM THE RISING PITCH OF COMPLAINTS ABOUT NATO -- COMING FROM THE VARIOUS LEADERS BOTH WITHIN AND OUTSIDE THE ALLIANCE. ACCOMPANYING THESE COMPLAINTS IS THE DIRE PREDICTION THAT -- THE NATO ALLIANCE IS NOW OBSOLETE – AND AT RISK OF ABANDONMENT.

THESE COMPLAINTS TEND TO BE FOCUSED IN TWO MAJOR AREAS. FIRST IS THE CONCERN THAT THE ALLIANCE IS NOT POSTURED – AND IN SOME CASES, NOT WILLING - TO COME TO THE DEFENSE OF ITS ALLIES. THE SECOND GENRE OF COMPLAINTS REVOLVES AROUND THE RECENT OCCURANCE OF INEQUITABLE BURDEN SHARING. THESE COMPLAINTS ARE LARGELY PHENOMENON OF MORE FUNDAMENTAL ISSUES: THAT OF THREAT IDENTIFICATION AND DIVERGING INTERESTS.

WHAT MY RESEARCH DETERMINED IS: NATO DOES REMAIN VIABLE – BUT, NOT FOR THE PURPOSE OF COLLECTIVE DEFENSE, UNLESS HARD DECISIONS ARE ADDRESSED – THAT HAVE LARGELY BEEN AVOIDED. THESE DECISIONS INCLUDE THREAT VALIDATION AND ESTABLISHING SYSTEMS TO ENSURE EQUITABLE BURDEN SHARING.

SECTION II – TYPES OF ALLIANCES

WHILE MOST OF US WOULD AGREE THAT THE NATO ALLIANCE WAS ESTABLISHED AS A COLLECTIVE DEFENSE ALLIANCE. ITS PRIMARY PURPOSE WAS TO DETER THE SOVIET THREAT -- AND LATER THE WARSAW PACT -- THROUGH BALANCING POWERS RESIDENT IN THE TRANSATLANTIC COMMUNITY. IN REALITY, HOWEVER -- NATO WAS FORMED FOR MULTIPLE PURPOSES -- BASED ON MULTIPLE RATIONALES. THEREFORE WHEN CONSIDERING ANY POSSIBLE ABANDONMENT OF THE ALLIANCE, WE OUGHT TO CONSIDER ALL OF THESE RATIONALES. LET ME EXPLAIN...

GIVEN THESE IMPETUSES TO CREATE AN ALLIANCE, WHAT KIND OF ALLIANCE IS NATO? THERE ARE THREE GENERAL TYPES OF ALLIANCES:

FIRST -- A COLLECTIVE DEFENSE ALLIANCE WHERE ALL MEMBERS ARE PLEDGED TO EACH OTHER'S DEFENSE. ARTICLE V IN NATO'S FOUNDING TREATY, UNQUESTIONABLY CATEGORIZES NATO AS A COLLECTIVE DEFENSE ALLIANCE -- AS IT STATES -- AN ATTACK AGAINST ONE IS AN ATTACK AGAINST ALL.

THE SECOND IS A -- COLLECTIVE SECURITY ALLIANCE WHERE ALL MEMBERS ARE PLEDGED TO ABIDE BY AGREED TENETS AND NORMS -- TO INCLUDE NON AGGRESSION AGAINST ONE ANOTHER. THE IDEA HERE IS -- THROUGH AGREED COMPLIANCE, A GREATER SECURITY ENSUES. BY VIRTUE OF THE FACT THAT NATO WAS INSTRUMENTAL IN KEEPING THE PEACE (A DÉTENTE) BETWEEN ITS MEMBERS FOR THE LAST 61 YEARS -- TESTIFIES TO ITS VALUE AS A COLLECTIVE SECURITY ALLIANCE. AND THIS ROLE WAS REINFORCED THROUGH THE ADDITION OF 10 NEW MEMBERS IN THE LAST 20 YEARS.

THE LAST TYPE OF ALLIANCE IS A -- MULTILATERAL ALLIANCE WITH A PURPOSE TO PURSUE WORKS PROMOTING AGREED INTERESTS. NATO'S SECURITY ACTIVITIES THROUGHOUT ITS HISTORY -- ESPECIALLY THE LAST 20 YEARS -- PERFORMING HUMANITARIAN SUPPORT, MILITARY DEVELOPMENT, COUNTER-PIRACY OPERATIONS, STABILITY AND PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS, AND SO ON -- SOLIDIFY ITS ROLE AS A MULTILATERAL ALLIANCE. NOTE, THESE ACTIVITIES DID NOT CONTRIBUTE DIRECTLY TO COUNTERING AN ARMED ATTACK, BUT WERE RATHER MANIFESTATIONS OF WORKS DONE TO PROMOTE GREATER STABILITY.

IN SHORT, NATO HAS OPERATED IN THE ROLE OF ALL THREE OF THESE TYPES OF ALLIANCE.

THE PURPOSE OF THE ALLIANCE PROVIDES SOME INSIGHT INTO ITS POTENTIAL LONGEVITY.

SPECIFICALLY -- IN THE LAST 100 YEARS MORE ALLIANCES WERE FORMED FOR MULTILATERAL PURPOSES THAN THOSE FOR COLLECTIVE SECURITY OR COLLECTIVE DEFENSE.

FURTHERMORE, OF THE 18 MAJOR MILITARY ALLIANCES EXISTING TODAY, THE MAJORITY (14) ARE MULTILATERAL ALLIANCES; FOLLOWED BY (11) COLLECTIVE SECURITY, WITH COLLECTIVE DEFENSE A DISTANT THIRD -- AT ONLY (4).

A POINT TO TAKE AWAY IS THAT IN THE LAST 100 YEARS, MULTILATERAL ALLIANCES WERE MORE ATTRACTIVE AND RESILIENT THAN THE OTHER TWO. APPLYING THIS LOGIC TO NATO IMPLIES THAT IT IS PERHAPS NATURAL FOR NATO TO EVOLVE INTO A MULTILATERAL CENTRIC ALLIANCE. IN FACT ONE MIGHT ARGUE THAT NATO HAS UNWITTINGLY MADE THIS TRANSITION ALREADY.

SECTION III -- WHY ALLIANCES DISBAND

NOW, LET ME BRIEFLY HIGHLIGHT WHY ALLIANCES DISBAND.

THERE ARE FOUR PRINCIPLE REASONS MILITARY SECURITY ALLIANCES DISBAND

1. THE MOST COMMON REASON IS THAT A MEMBER OF THE ALLIANCE IS VANQUISHED OR THE MEMBER CEASES TO EXIST. OF THE 65 MAJOR SECURITY ALLIANCES FOR THE LAST 500 YEARS, 45% OF THEM LOST MEMBERS OR DISBANDED FOR THIS REASON.

2. THE SECOND GREATEST REASON REVOLVES AROUND THE IDEA ITS MEMBERS INTERESTS DIVERGED. HERE, 27% OF THEM WERE ABANDONED.

3. THE THIRD REASON FOR DISSOLUTION (BUT NOT BY MUCH) IS THAT AN ALLIANCES 'THREAT' DISAPPEARS. 24% ABROGATED THEIR TREATIES FOR THIS RATIONALE.

4. A DISTANT FOURTH REASON IS THAT ONE OR MORE MEMBERS OF THE ALLIANCE FAILED TO ABIDE BY ITS TREATIES TENETS – ABOUT 4% FALL INTO THIS CATEGORY.

IT IS GOOD NEWS FOR NATO THAT NONE OF ITS MEMBERS ARE AT RISK OF BEING VANQUISHED – THUS REMOVING THE LARGEST REASON FOR AN ALLIANCE TO DISBAND FROM FURTHER SERIOUS CONSIDERATION.

BEFORE I LEAVE THIS TOPIC HOWEVER -- OF DEBATE RECENTLY IS WHAT A 'DEFEAT' IN AFGHANISTAN WOULD MEAN TO THE ALLIANCE. WHILE NOT THE SAME AS HAVING ONE OF ITS MEMBER NATIONS CATASTROPHICALLY FAIL, AN 'AFGHAN DEFEAT' DOES SUGGEST THAT THE ALLIANCE WILL LOSE SOME OF ITS APPEAL, PRESTIGE, POWER, AND CREDIBILITY. THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT NATO WILL PAY A PRICE IF THIS OCCURS.

REGARDING THE LOSS OF A THREAT. THE IMPLOSION OF THE SOVIET UNION AND SUBSEQUENT ABROGATION OF THE WARSAW PACT HAVE BEEN AT THE HEART OF THE RECENT DEBATE ABOUT NATO'S VIABILITY. TO DATE, NO OVERBEARING THREAT HAS STEPPED INTO THE SOVIET VOID (– ALTHOUGH IRAN IS LURKING ON THE SIDELINES.) SO WITH NO 'THREAT' THERE IS NOTHING TO DETER OR DEFEND AGAINST AND CONSEQUENTLY THERE IS NO REASON TO CONTINUE AS A COLLECTIVE DEFENSE ALLIANCE – THE RUSSIANS CERTAINLY PUSH THIS RATIONALE.

HOWEVER, MANY ALLIANCE MEMBERS ARE RELUCTANT TO HAVE NATO GIVE UP THIS ROLE, AS IT IS A CENTRAL PILLAR IN THEIR NATIONAL DEFENSE PROGRAMS. MANY ARGUE TO RETAIN A COLLECTIVE DEFENSE ROLE IS TO BE 'READY' FOR THE 'NEXT THREAT'. AND FROM A PURELY NATIONAL DEFENSE PERSPECTIVE PRESERVATION OF THIS ROLE IS ATTRACTIVE. UNFORTUNATELY, WITHOUT A THREAT, IT IS DIFFICULT TO DETERMINE THE REQUIRED POLICY, STRUCTURES AND CAPABILITIES – AND IT IS ONCE SOURCE RANCOROUS DEBATES THAT IS FOMENTING NATO'S DIVISIVE BEHAVIORS.

THERE ARE TWO OTHER ISSUES CLOUDING THE QUESTION OF THREATS. FIRST-- CENTRAL AND EASTERN MEMBERS OF THE ALLIANCE FERVENTLY BELIEVE THAT RUSSIA HAS FILLED THE SHOES OF THE SOVIETS. WHILE THEIR WESTERN ALLIES – TO INCLUDE THE UNITED STATES – DO NOT. SO NATO IS SITTING ON THE HORNS OF A DILEMMA REGARDING RUSSIA, A DILEMMA THAT IN ITSELF MAY DRIVE A WEDGE THROUGH THE CENTER OF NATO IF NOT CAREFUL. CERTAINLY, THE RUSSIAN LEADERSHIP IS ACTIVELY LENDING ITS WEIGHT TO HAMMER ON THE WEDGE WHEN IT DECLARES NATO AS ITS

NUMBER ONE THREAT, AND CONDUCTS TRAINING EXERCISES IN BELARUS WITH NATO FORMATIONS AS ITS TARGET.

THE SECOND COMPLICATING FACTOR IS THE SECURITY RISK RESIDENT IN THE NEW DOMAINS OF CYBER, SPACE, AND TRANSPORTATION, NON-STATE ACTORS, ECONOMIC CALAMITIES, PANDEMIC DISEASE AND NATURAL DISASTERS. IN GENERAL, NATO ALLIES DIFFER AS TO WHETHER SOME -- OR ALL OF THESE SECURITY RISKS ARE CHALLENGES FOR NATO AT ALL. CONSEQUENTLY, IT REMAINS DIFFICULT FOR THE ALLIANCE TO AGREE ON DETERRENT AND DEFENSIVE MEASURES FOR THESE LARGELY UNCONVENTIONAL AND IRREGULAR THREATS – PARTICULARLY WHEN NATO'S TREATY PLEDGE **ONLY** RECOGNIZES 'ARMED ATTACK'.

IN SHORT, MUCH CONFUSION REIGNS INSIDE NATO REGARDING THREATS, AND WITHOUT AN IDENTIFIED THREAT, ITS TOUGH TO DETERMINE THE WHERE TO APPLY YOUR SCARCE RESOURCES – PUT ANOTEHRWAY IN TIMES OF PEACE, POLITICAL DEBATE DEVLOVES TO “QUESTIONS OF WHERE TO APPLY SCARCE RESOURCES”.

NOW, REGARDING THE CHALLENGE OF 'DIVERGING INTERESTS': DIFFERING INTERESTS IS NOTHING NEW TO NATO – THE MOST INFAMOUS CASE PROBABLY TYPIFIED WHEN FRANCE PULLED OUT OF NATO'S MILITARY STRUCTURE IN 1967 FOR DIFFERENCES OF OPINION WITH THE U.S. AND OTHER MAJOR ALLIES.

TODAY IN NATO, THERE ARE A NUMBER OF TOPICS WHERE SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES OF OPINION EXIST -- NOT THE LEAST OF WHICH IS THE QUESTION OF WHETHER OR NOT RUSSIA IS A THREAT.

A SECOND MAJOR POINT OF FRICTION INVOLVING DIVERGING INTERESTS IS MANIFESTED IN THE ASCENDENCY OF THE EUROPEAN UNION. HERE MANY NATIONS WITHIN THE EU (LED BY GERMANY AND FRANCE) OFTEN PLACE THE ADVANCEMENT OF THE EU OVER THAT OF NATO ACTIVITIES – COUNTER PIRACY OPERATIONS IN THE GULF OF ADEN, AND EU RELATIONSHIPS WITH TURKEY HIGHLIGHT THIS DIVERGENCE. THIS FRICTION ESSENTIALY BRINGS NATO DECISION MAKING TO A STAND STILL MORE THAN ANY OTHER.

AND NOT TO LEAVE THE UNITED STATES OUT -- IT'S VIEW OF TERRORISM AS A NATIONAL SECURITY THREAT ARE CONTRARY TO THOSE OF MANY ALLIES WHO VIEW IT AS A CIVIL POLICE MATTER.

THESE ARE BUT A FEW OF THE DIFFERENT INTEREST THAT FREEZE NATO'S ABILITY TO MAKE DECISIONS -- THUS WEAKENING ITS VIABILITY.

THE NEXT RATIONALE: FAILURE TO ABIDE BY TENETS OF TREATY AGREEMENTS.

THIS IS AN AREA OF CONCERN ON TWO FRONTS. AGAIN FOR OUR CENTRAL EUROPEAN ALLIES IT'S ABOUT RUSSIA. CURRENTLY THESE NATIONS BELIEVE THEY HAVE BEEN ABANDONED BY THE ALLIANCE ON THE ISSUE OF RUSSIA. THEY REQUIRE ASSURANCES – WHICH THEY DO NOT BELIEVE EXIST TODAY.

AT THE CENTER OF NATO'S DEBILITATING DEBATES IS THE QUESTION OF BURDEN SHARING – THIS ISSUE HAS COME TO A HEAD IN THE AFGHAN MISSION WHERE 35% OF ITS MEMBERS PROVIDE OVER 90% OF THE FORCES.

A SECOND COMPONENT OF BRUDEN SHARING INVOLVES SHARING HARDSHIPS. THIS PROBLEM IS AGAIN HIGHLIGHTED IN AFGHANISTAN, WHERE LARGELY ONLY FOUR NATIONS FIGHT IN THE TOUGHEST AREAS AND ARE BURDENED WITH FULLY 80% OF ALL COMBAT DEATHS OVER THE LIFE OF THE MISSION THROUGH OCTOBER 2009). THE CAVALCADE OF DOMESTIC AND POLITICAL COMPLAINTS FROM THE LEAD THEM TO CONCLUDE THAT THEIR ALLIES ARE NOT HOLDING UP THEIR END OF THE BARGAIN.

SECTION IV.

SO APPLYING THE CONCLUSIONS STEMMING FROM THE RESULTS OF TREATY ABROGATION RATIONALE, HERE IS WHERE NATO STANDS REGARDING ITS THREE 'ALLIANCE' ROLES:

TO CONTINUE AS A COLLECTIVE DEFESE ALLIANCES, NATO IS AT GREAT RISK. BECAUSE:
- THE ALLIANCE CANNOT AGREE ON A THREAT. CONSEQUENTLY, IT HAS FALLEN INTO A DEBILITATING CYCLE OF ATTEMPTING TO DETERMINE THE POLICIES, STRUCTURES AND CAPABILITIES FOR A OBSOLETE PURPOSE.

- FURTHERMORE, THE PERCEPTION THAT MEMBERS ARE OR WILL NOT ABIDE BY THE AGREED TENETS IS RENTING THE FABRIC OF TRUST BETWEEN MEMBERS.
- AND GIVEN THE SHIFT OF INTERESTS, MEMBERS BECOME MORE INCLINED TO LOOK ELSEWHERE FOR SUPPORT – PARTICULARLY AMONG EU MEMBERS.

SECOND, REGARDING RETENTION OF ITS ROLE AS A COLLECTIVE SECURITY ALLIANCE, IT AGAIN IS AT RISK, BUT TO A LESSER EXTENT THAN THAT OF THE COLLECTIVE DEFENSE ROLE. THE GOOD NEWS IS THAT A COLLECTIVE SECURITY ALLIANCE DOES NOT REQUIRE A 'THREAT' TO ACHIEVE ITS PURPOSE. HOWEVER, IF BURDEN SHARING REMAINS INEQUITABLE, IT VALIDATES THE COMPLAINT THAT MEMBERS ARE NOT ABIDING BY AGREED TENETS. MORE IMPORTANTLY, HOWEVER, IS THE CONFUSION PRESENTED BY THE EU AS IT NOW SEES ITSELF AS THE ORGANIZATION FOR WHICH EUROPEAN NATIONS TO COALESCE AROUND. IF THE EU CONTINUES TO REPLACE NATO IN THE ROLE AS THE COLLECTIVE SECURITY MANAGER FOR EUROPE, NATO WILL FIND ITSELF OUT OF WORK AS A COLLECTIVE SECURITY ALLIANCE.

LASTLY, NATO'S GREATEST POTENTIAL FOR SURVIVAL RESIDES IN ITS ROLE AS A MULTILATERAL ALLIANCE. LIKE THE COLLECTIVE SECURITY ALLIANCE, A THREAT IS NOT REQUIRED. FURTHERMORE, THIS FORM OF ALLIANCE ALLOWS THE GREATEST FLEXIBILITY WITH REGARD TO ACCOMMODATING A VARIETY OF INTERESTS. HOWEVER, NATO SHOULD BE WARNED THAT IF INTERESTS CONTINUE TO DRAMATICALLY DIVERGE, THEN IT WILL BECOME HARDER AND HARDER TO ACHIEVE CONSENSUS ON SECURITY MATTERS.

NOW, NATO'S LEADERSHIP DOES NOT HAVE TO ACCEPT THIS FATE. TO AVOID IT THEY NEED TO ADDRESS THE QUESTIONS HAVE BEEN DOGED BECAUSE THEY ARE DIFFICULT.

FIRST THE ALLIANCE MUST SERIOUSLY ADDRESS THE ISSUE OF RUSSIA. IF THE WORRIES OF THE CENTRAL AND EASTERN PARTNERS CANNOT BE ASSUAGED – AGREEMENT ON IMPORTANT ISSUES WILL BE VIRTUALLY IMPOSSIBLE TO ACHIEVE. THIS WILL NOT BE EASY, BECAUSE RUSSIAN LEADERSHIP WILL NOT MAKE IT EASY.

SECOND THE NATO MUST NOT ONLY AGREE ON THE NEW THREATS FOUND IN A HIGHLY GLOBALIZED 21ST CENTURY, THEY MUST AGREE ON THEIR PRIORITIZATION. FROM THESE DECISIONS, THEY WILL BE ABLE TO DETERMINE POLICIES, STRUCTURE AND CAPABILITIES REQUIRED -- AND STOP THE DIVISIVE DEBATES

THIRD, THE ALLIANCE MUST ASK ITSELF HOW TO ENSURE EQUITABLE BURDEN SHARING. THIS IS NECESSARY TO STOP THE HEMORRAGING OF TRUST BETWEEN ONE ANOTHER.

IF THOSE THREE QUESTIONS AND DECISION ARE NOT MADE, THEN THE ALLIANCE HAS IN EFFECT ABANDONED ANY POSSIBILITY TO CONTINUE AS A COLLECTIVE DEFENSE ALLIANCE – EXCEPT IN NAME ONLY.

NEXT NATO MUST DECIDE IF IT WANTS TO CONTINUE AS A COLLECTIVE SECURITY ALLIANCE. IF AFFIRMED, THEN TOGETHER WITH CREATING SYSTEMS FOR EQUITABLE BURDEN SHARING, IT WILL NEED TO RECTIFY ITS PURPOSE WITH THAT OF THE EU. UNFORTUNATELY, IF THE EU DOES NOT CHOOSE TO INTERACT ON THIS TOPIC CONSTRUCTIVELY, THE TWO ORGANIZATIONS WILL CONTINUE TO STEP ON EACH OTHER'S TOES – AGAIN SOWING THE SEEDS OF SELF-DOUBT.

THE LAST DECISION TO MAKE INVOLVES ENDORSING THE ROLE OF A MULTILATERAL ALLIANCE. WHILE ALREADY EXECUTING THIS PURPOSE, AN OVERT RECOGNITION OF THIS ROLE WILL PROVIDE NEEDED JUSTIFICATION FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF CAPABILITIES, STRUCTURE AND POLICY. ONLY WITH AN AGREED AND ACHIEVABLE PURPOSE WILL THE ALLIANCE BE ABLE TO JUSTIFY ITS RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS AND CONSEQUENTLY LESSEN ITS DIVISIVE BEHAVIOR.