



For Immediate Release  
Office of the Press Secretary  
April 3, 2008

## Background Briefing by Senior Administration Officials

Palace of the Parliament  
Bucharest, Romania

12:00 P.M. (Local)



SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Ladies and gentlemen, first to say that the first session of the NAC is still going on. So this is a preliminary readout. And the issue of Georgia-Ukraine MAP has not yet been discussed. It will be discussed in a smaller session at the beginning -- at the end of this session. So we're not going to talk about that right now. We'll talk about everything else.

It has been a very good and frank session. Almost all heads have had one round. The President, as dean of the corps, the longest-serving head of state, went first. I want to give you a sense of what he said, because he led off very strongly. First of all, he said on behalf of everybody, happy birthday to Jaap de Hoop Scheffer. It's his 60th birthday today.

He began by talking about how much the Alliance has changed in the eight years of his presidency, making the point that Afghanistan, a NATO mission in Afghanistan would have been inconceivable before September 11th. He then went on to say that this is an alliance that has proven that it has a profound regard for democracy and the need to protect and nurture democracies. And he was specifically talking about Afghanistan, Iraq, what we've done with enlargement throughout Europe, Ukraine, Georgia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, and even our outreach to Serbia.

On Afghanistan, he said that he was quite heartened by what he had heard last night. He thanked the President of France, in particular. France did say today, clearly, that they will be adding a battalion of troops to RC East in Afghanistan, and that after the current Turkish lead, they intend to take command of RC Capital, as well, with an augmentation to provide for that in full. That allowed the President to say that with the French sending troops to RC East, U.S. will be able to move some of our troops from East to South, to Kandahar, and that this will meet the Canadian requirement. We have the Marines now, and then we'll be able to come from East to South after the Marines.

On Iraq, the President expressly thanked the allies for the contribution that NATO makes to the training of Iraqi security forces. And he made the point that freedom is transformative in the Middle East, and that NATO is helping young democracies there.

He highlighted what we have done at this summit to strengthen NATO's special operations forces, what we've done on cyber-security and on missile defense. I'm going to come back to what we've agreed on missile defense at the end, but he made the express point, missile defense is not aimed at Russia, it's aimed at helping protect Europe from any potential threats. And he thanked Poland and the Czech Republic for being forward thinkers.

He expressly made reference to President Sarkozy, remembering that President Sarkozy's November visit to the United States had had a big impact "like the latest incarnation of Elvis" on the American people.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: That is a quote.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: He said expressly, the President did in his statement, that the EU needs to be a strong actor on the world stage, including in security; that the U.S. supports a strong Europe, supports closer NATO-EU ties across the full spectrum of civil and military capabilities.

President Sarkozy followed the President. We will let the French give you a full sense of that. I would simply say that one of his first statements was that our President's statement had opened the door for France's full renewal of its relations with NATO.

Now, President Sarkozy and President Merkel will formally announce their joint decision on the location for their joint invitation for the 2009 summit in a couple of minutes, so we'll let them do that. I would simply say that from an American point of view, it will be very symbolic and an important statement for the Alliance and for transatlantic relations -- the location.

All allies were very strong on missile defense today, reflecting the compromise that will be in our communique, which will be out shortly -- I'll go through that in a second. Also in our communique we have NATO agreement to extend Intensified Dialogue, that step in integration with NATO above Partnership for Peace and before MAP, to Bosnia-Herzegovina and to Montenegro. And you will find when the communique is out, which will be in about an hour, that there will also be very strong open door language to Serbia when Serbia is ready.

The enlargement decision is not finalized yet; they're still talking. We are, as you know, expecting two invitations and an invitation to Macedonia when the name is settled.

On missile defense --

Q Were there -- (inaudible) --

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: I'm not going to go further than what I said.

On missile defense, the communique will be out shortly, but I want to just make sure to highlight for you what you're going to see in the text, agreed among all 26 nations. Let me stress that this was a negotiation that spanned the bullish proponents who are engaged in the system, to allies who have previously been skeptical, to allies who are currently not covered by the U.S. system, or not fully covered, and have been concerned.

First of all, allies will say that ballistic missile proliferation poses an increasing threat to allies' forces and territory, populations. We expect allies to recognize the substantial contribution to the protection of allies from long-range ballistic missiles to be provided by the U.S.-led system. We expect allies to confirm that we will explore ways to link the U.S.-led European-based deployments to current NATO missile defense efforts and any future NATO missile defense efforts. Then we expect a tasking from the heads of state and government back to the NAC to develop options for a comprehensive missile defense architecture for the uncovered parts of the Alliance, and to bring those options to the summit table in 2009 for heads to review.

Okay, so if you recall what the U.S. had been asking for: strong recognition of the threat, strong recognition of the contribution that our system makes, linkage, NATO and U.S. efforts, and then a tasking to continue the work and ensure that the NATO track keeps pace with the U.S. track. I will also say and [my colleague] will go further, allies also will commend current NATO-Russia work on missile defense -- little known fact that we actually do do a lot of NATO-Russia work on missile defense -- make clear that we're all committed to transparency and confidence-building, and all allies will encourage Russia to accept the offers on the table, U.S. and NATO, for further cooperation.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: On missile defense, it's important to see this progress in the context of where the Alliance was and where the discussion between the United States and Europe was on missile defense 14 months ago, when President Putin raised this issue in a rather spectacular fashion at the Munich Security Conference in February 2007. Then, many of your colleagues, and perhaps many of you, wrote of this as the latest wedge issue between the United States and Europe. Those of us in the administration disputed that.

Now, 14 months later we see that NATO is united in embracing missile defense as a strategic concept, embracing NATO's role, and endorsing the U.S. system, which is under discussion with the Poles and the Czechs as part of a comprehensive U.S.-NATO system, possibly, possibly -- if the Russians agree -- involving them.

But that is -- and not only is that progress, but that's a turnabout from 14 months ago, and it's on that with -- the progress on Afghanistan and the progress as [my colleague] mentioned in France as reintegration integration.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Senior official mentioned.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Senior official one mentioned -- you referred to my name, so I'm just returning the favor.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Sorry. (Laughter.)

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Those -- if you look at where we were six months ago, those were achievements in those areas, it would have made an extraordinarily successful and productive NATO summit. Much is -- much attention is directed to the enlargement issues and the MAP issues, and that's understandable, but it's important to realize that all of these issues have gone from the category of undecided and, in the case of missile defense, initially divisive, to issues where the Alliance is solid. That's a big movement forward.

Q Can I ask one thing --

Q What accounts for that?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Several things account for that -- that's a fair question -- one of which is that the American position became much more NATO-oriented and our outreach to Russia at the same time intensified. We had a very forward-leaning set of proposals for the Russians, and a very forward concept of how NATO would be linked into our system.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: If I could add to that, as somebody who lives in Europe, I think when we first started coming to NATO to talk about the U.S. system, there really was a very shallow understanding in Europe of missile defenses -- that these are defensive systems, that they're not offensive systems; that the protection we were offering was actually going to cover populations across a lot of the European territory. And then that we had allies who wanted to be part of it, and then that we were so much more open to cooperation with Russia than we had been before. So --

Q May I have --

Q So the issue was --

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: It's a fair question.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Partly it was education.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Partly education, partly that our policy broadened as the NATO pieces and our outreach to Russia caught up with what we were doing with the Poles and the Czechs. And then as allied opinion began to -- and European opinion began to shift, you had a kind of virtuous cycle created, so you ended up with this rather impressive shift.

Q And enough to get the threat assessment by NATO.

Q When you said this one right here, "We expect allies to recognize," is that a quote from the statement? Are you saying, "we expect" meaning you two right here, or is that part of that language --

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: You're going to see that in the statement.

Q Okay.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: The statement is not released yet, so --

Q I understand.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: -- I'm in the condition --

Q The U.S. and the Czech Republic are to announce today here in Bucharest that they have achieved an agreement on placing the radar in the Czech Republic. Could you say, is there any date set for the signing or when Secretary Rice visits to Prague, she's got invitation for the --

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: I have learned in my career not to anticipate the announcements of my boss and other foreign ministers. I've -- I'm aware of that rumor circulating about progress between the United States and the Czech Republic, and I hope that that rumor can be confirmed in the course of the day. So that's all I'll say now.

Q Just on the -- when you said that there will be a tasking to develop options for a comprehensive missile defense architecture for the Alliance, can you elaborate on that? Are you saying that the Alliance is going to develop one big, happy NATO missile defense system?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Here's what happens: You have the U.S. system, which covers a lot of the Alliance against the long-range threat; you have allies who are at short and medium range threat who are uncovered. We've been talking about NATO playing a role in completing that coverage, but what we've had to do is -- not only as the U.S., but as the 26 countries, study how much is covered by the U.S. system so we can figure out what's left. Then there are many different ways that you could complete this and link the two together. There's some technical work, and then there are political decisions.

So the idea is, at the next summit, we would have options ranging from NATO-owned and operated, to nationally owned, strung together by NATO, and heads could, once all that technical work is done, a year from now, have something to look at to inform political discussion.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: What has happened conceptually in the missile defense debate is that it has gone from a reread of the debate in the 1980s -- stale and pointless -- to an actual 21st century debate dealing with actual threats in our time, and with the actual systems we're proposing, rather than sort of rummaging around through past talking points of 25 years ago. And that is -- that's the result of a lot of work by a lot of people over the past year.

Q Can I just ask on missile defense --

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Let me go back to -- let me just make on this one -- I'll go back to the threat point. One thing that happened over the last year was we had a previous NATO study of the threat, 2004 study. It was updated last year, and it was on that basis that 26 countries determined together that the threat is increasing. And frankly, you know, it's hard to get NATO as a whole to move if we don't have a common threat understanding. So I think that's one of the important factors that's contributing to folks saying, we got to ensure we've got this option.

Q Can you give us a sense of the -- on Afghanistan, a sense of the numbers of who's going where? Will the 2,200 Marines stay in the south for longer than seven months? Will -- how many American forces will rotate down from the east, and when? And what is the size of the French battalion, in numbers?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: The French are going to have to size their own battalion -- working with SAC here, talk to them about their numbers. With regard to the Marines, as you know, they are there until the fall and they are all in RC South with some -- with the police trainers, the extra 1,000 in RC South and RC West. The idea here would be, as the French bring their battalion into RC East -- and talk to them about the timing, but my sense would be fall -- that will take up some of the work that American forces are now doing, and allow us to put equivalent amount of combat power down in Kandahar.

In terms of specific numbers, that work has to be done.

Q The full French renewal of relations with NATO -- so we're going back to pre-de Gaulle, is that what you're suggesting?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: You got it. It's going to take some time, but he's making -- he's made the announcement, absolutely.

Q Does that mean NATO headquarters will move back to Paris?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Wouldn't that be fabulous? For my successor -- that stinks. (Laughter.)

Q Does that mean they're rejoining the -- what was it --

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Integrated military structure.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: That is implicit, but you should ask --

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: But there's work to be done.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: -- there is more work to be done. You should ask the French to characterize the next steps ahead.

Q It's on missile defense, and how -- in the shifting European attitudes that you've set out, how far is there either a reassurance from you that we're making progress with the Russians in assuaging their concerns, or how much is it that the Europeans now realize that the Russians are kind of being rather "Bolshy" on all of this? (Laughter.) And basically they shrug their shoulders and said --

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: I'll let that colorful characterization stand for itself, but I would say what was -- what I thought, that I noticed was important with European governments and some of the media was the extent of the U.S. offers, more than the Russian response. It was the fact that our offer was clearly a very serious one, very detailed, very ambitious, and open to working with the Russians. As we explained this, including through briefings -- public discussion, but also technical briefings at NATO, several times -- in fact, repeatedly -- the Europeans --

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Four rounds of NATO consultations, reinforced by experts with capitals -- three of those with a concomitant piece with the Russians.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: The Europeans realize that we were very serious about this; that this was not a pro-forma exercise, but that we actually meant it, and they could tell not only by our words, but by the complexity and the ambition of our proposals. When they realized this, they started taking another look, and as they have evaluated the threat and as NATO evaluated the threat, as they -- as Europeans evaluated our proposals and as they evaluated our NATO -- the NATO-ness of our thinking, this all became -- as I said, this all entered into a virtuous cycle in transatlantic discussions on the issue.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Sorry, just to add one point on this, which is also that when the Russians started asking questions about the third site, and wanted confidence-building, wanted transparency, the confidence-building measures that we have offered, and we have briefed to the Europeans, where we've -- you know, all the things that you heard Rice and Gates say when they were in Moscow, liaison officers, we don't turn the system on until the threat is significant -- all of this stuff really blunted Russian arguments that this was dangerous to Russia, and allies could see that.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Quite right.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: We've got to go. Thanks guys.

END 12:19 P.M. (Local)

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