

benefit NATO. We need not question whether Romania will be a positive force within NATO. Romania has risked the lives of its soldiers for the benefit of the United States.

Participation in Operation Desert Storm—Romania contributed a military hospital company to the Allied Forces.

Participation in Afghanistan—Romania used its own airlift, a C-130, to transport a battalion of soldiers to Afghanistan. These forces have made two rotations. Romania is currently involved in the peacekeeping mission in Afghanistan.

Operation Iraqi Freedom—Romania mobilized its military police and a nuclear, biological, chemical detection team to work alongside U.S. forces in Iraq.

Currently 5,000 U.S. marines are based at Constanza, Romania. Our strategic threats are different today than they were 50 years ago. We are no longer endangered by Russia. Today, the greatest threat to NATO and its members is the threat of terrorism and the spread of weapons of mass destruction. As a result, the U.S. should consider whether it would be wise to reconfigure our forces overseas.

Our new threats are coming from the Middle East and southwest Asia. Romania and Bulgaria are halfway between Germany and the Middle East. Moving bases closer to the threat will allow the U.S. to mobilize faster and get to the fight sooner. We would also be welcome in Romania and Bulgaria. There is some question whether we are still welcome in Western Europe.

There are those who say NATO is dead or has no modern mission. That is simply not the case. The Soviet Union may no longer be a threat, but threats still exist. The end of the cold war may have erased the notion of warfighting where million-man armies face million-man armies on the European Continent. But, the end of the cold war unleashed despots willing to use the asymmetrical means of terrorism and WMD proliferation as methods of aggression and diplomatic blackmail.

NATO must adopt a new mission—combating terrorism and WMD proliferation both in Europe and globally. The threats that emerged from September 11 do not only affect the United States, these threats should be a concern to the entire NATO community. As we have seen, al-Qaeda cells were active in Germany, Spain, France, and Italy.

International terrorism on our shores was unknown to Americans prior to September 11. However, it was not uncommon in Europe. The other NATO members should unite behind America's interests to root out terrorism and stop WMD proliferation because the European members have been targets before and could be targets, again. This will require NATO to look not only within its borders, but NATO must also look beyond its borders. NATO members and Partnership for Peace participants stretch from the Pacific Ocean in the U.S. to bordering

on China in Kazakhstan. There are several countries just on the edges of NATO's borders who wish to terrorize those countries within NATO.

NATO has made a pledge to combat terrorism and WMD proliferation. The promise made by the NATO heads of state at the Prague summit to focus on terrorism and WMD proliferation is encouraging. Now, we need action. We should not let recent spats with France and Germany obstruct the implementation of this new mission. Moreover, France and Germany should not let their disagreements with the U.S. obstruct this new mission. Such actions benefit none.

For NATO to remain relevant, the European members must close the capabilities gap between U.S. and European forces. Many NATO members, including France and Germany, have reduced defense spending over the last decade. Such reductions leave the alliance vulnerable and make it difficult for NATO members to participate in operations with the U.S.

U.S. defense spending is dwarfing European defense spending. America's defense budget is greater than all other 18 NATO members combined. The \$48 billion dollar increase in U.S. defense spending from fiscal year 2002 to fiscal year 2003 is greater than what 12 of the other 18 members spend on defense.

Europe's leaders are world leaders. NATO members must make a greater investment in national security, NATO's longevity, and world security. We do not need them to spend as much as the U.S.; we need them to complement the U.S. and add value to NATO operations.

NATO should focus its spending on interoperability and communications improvements. The U.S. has committed billions to making it so all four branches of the military can be linked using the same communications devices. We are dedicated to interoperability within our own forces. It has not been easy and the job is not finished, but we have seen the fruits of this effort in Iraq and Afghanistan. Who would have imagined years ago that a B-52 pilot could talk with a Special Operations team on the ground to deliver close air support? This was possible because of interoperability.

NATO must focus on such interoperability. Not only must we ensure that a European tanker plane can refuel a U.S. fighter. We must ensure that 26 members, who speak many different languages, can share a common communications network and operate as one cohesive force, not 26 independent militaries. If this gap is not closed, no value will be added and we will have to question NATO's worth.

NATO must not be just an alliance based on military strength. NATO must be a diplomatic alliance. Military might alone is not the solution. First, we must use all diplomatic means to achieve peace. The united strength of NATO as a diplomatic force will also increase the security of NATO's members.

In the near future, NATO must make decisions to determine whether it will

be a vibrant alliance capable of protecting its members in the 21st century or whether it is a relic of the past. I know it can have a meaningful mission in the future—a mission focused on rooting out terrorism and stopping the spread of WMD. To do so, NATO members must increase defense spending and focus on modernization and interoperability. I am confident NATO's members want NATO to have a great role in shaping the 21st century. As a member of NATO, the U.S. should push for a strong alliance. By expanding NATO to include seven new members, we will take a key step in making NATO strong and viable for the 21st century. The Senate sent a strong message of support by approving the admission of Romania, Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Slovenia, and Slovakia to NATO. The vote is good for the safety of the U.S., Europe, and the world.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT ACT OF 2001

• Mr. SMITH. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about the need for hate crimes legislation. On May 1, 2003, Senator KENNEDY and I introduced the Local Law Enforcement Act, a bill that would add new categories to current hate crimes law, sending a signal that violence of any kind is unacceptable in our society.

I would like to describe a terrible crime that occurred September 12, 2001, in Bridgeport, CT. A Brazilian waiter was attacked on the street by eight men who verbally accosted him because they believed him to be of Arab descent. The man was also physically attacked by the group and suffered a broken arm and several facial bruises.

I believe that Government's first duty is to defend its citizens, to defend them against the harms that come out of hate. The Local Law Enforcement Enhancement Act is a symbol that can become substance. I believe that by passing this legislation and changing current law, we can change hearts and minds as well.●

ROSALIE ASLESEN RETIRES FROM SPEARFISH HIGH SCHOOL

• Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize and honor Rosalie Aslesen on the occasion of her retirement as school librarian for Spearfish High School in Spearfish, SD.

A native of Spearfish, Rosalie graduated from Spearfish High School and received her bachelor of arts degree in theatre arts from Black Hills State University in Spearfish. After graduation, she served as a Red Cross volunteer, assisting troops in Korea in the 1960s, spending time living in Hawaii, Virginia, and Maryland before returning for a brief time to Spearfish. She