Mr. President, I yield the floor.

RECESS

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, I ask the Senate recess for no longer than 10 minutes and at the end of that recess period the senior Senator from West Virginia be recognized.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Thereupon, at 4:16 p.m., the Senate recessed until 4:25 p.m.; whereupon, the Senate reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. SESSIONS).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senator from West Virginia is to be recognized.

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I may yield to the distinguished senior Senator from North Carolina for such time as he may require to introduce some guests.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered. The Senator from North Carolina is recognized.

Mr. HELMS. I thank the Chair and certainly thank the distinguished Senator from West Virginia for whom I have the greatest admiration.

VISIT TO THE SENATE BY PARLIAMENTARIANS OF THE REPUBLIC OF CHINA ON TAIWAN

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, today we have in this Chamber a distinguished group of parliamentarians from the Republic of China on Taiwan. I invite Senators who have not already done so to come over and say a quick hello to our visitors.

RECESS

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate stand in recess for 3 minutes.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 4:26 p.m., recessed until 4:30 p.m.; whereupon, the Senate reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. SESSIONS).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia is recognized.

Mr. BYRD. Thank you, Mr. President.

NATO: THE NEXT GENERATION

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, this weekend, the 19 member nations of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization will gather in Washington to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the establishment of NATO. Some may see the juxtaposition of this summit against the images of NATO airstrikes over Yugoslavia as being ironic. I see it differently. I see it as prophetic.

The world has changed in the past 50 years, but as the events in Kosovo so graphically illustrate, the world has grown no less dangerous. NATO, likewise, has undergone significant changes over the years but remains no less important to the security of Europe. The key challenge facing NATO today is the dramatic change in the nature of the threat. The cold war is history; the Soviet Union is defunct; the Berlin Wall is just a pile of rubble. Forces massed along the borders have given way to flash points dotted around the globe. The tense but symmetrical standoff in Europe between the East and the West has been exchanged for the capriciousness of terrorists and tyrants.

Just as the nature of the threat has evolved, so must the structure and mission of NATO metamorphose if it is to remain relevant into the 21st century.

In 1949, when the alliance was formed, the Soviet Union and its satellites posed the only credible threat to Western security. It was the chilly dawn of the cold war era, and NATO was precision-tuned to meet the cold war challenge. In the ensuing decades, as NATO expanded from the original 12 to 16 member nations, the alliance grew in strength and stature to guard Western Europe against the formidable forces of the Warsaw Pact nations.

Conflict in Korea and Vietnam, turbulence in the Middle East, the growing influence of China—none of the cataclysmic events of the second half of the 20th century deterred NATO from its focus on the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. And, in the end, NATO's intensity and single-mindedness paid off handsomely, with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact.

Through the years, NATO has adjusted its strategy and its mission to meet changing circumstances, but never has the challenge been as great or as far reaching as it is today. Where once NATO contended with the shifting fortunes of a cold war enemy massed along a single front, today the alliance is confronted with brush fires in its backyard, the threat of terrorism from geographically remote nations and organizations, and the proliferation of nuclear weapons in virtually every direction.

To meet this shifting political and military landscape, NATO has expanded on its primary focus of defending its members against the threat of attack by reaching out to its former foes to promote European stability and security. Only last month, Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic were welcomed into the alliance. And nine other nations are clamoring for membership.

It is in this context that the 19 members of the alliance will gather in Washington to mark the anniversary of NATO and to discuss the future of the alliance. And it is in this context that the conflict in Kosovo can serve as a useful template for many of the challenges that the alliance is likely to face in the early years of the 21st century.

The lessons learned in Kosovo, preliminary though they may be at this point, should be brought to the summit table. The lessons that are still to come, as NATO prosecutes the attack on Yugoslavia, must be accommodated in any future strategy.

Several specific issues arising from the Kosovo conflict deserve careful consideration by the members of the alliance. And these include the following:

First, NATO should discuss the wisdom of establishing a more robust forward operating presence in Europe beyond alliance headquarters. Given their history, the Balkans are a logical choice. The time and logistical constraints built into ferrying people and equipment from the United States, Britain, France and elsewhere to the front are formidable. The result is a potentially serious disconnect in the ability of commanders in the field to respond rapidly and effectively to changing circumstances. One example of the problems this remote staging has caused is the agonizing wait for the U.S. Apache helicopters to arrive in theater—a delay that has cost NATO in terms of tactical flexibility and has given the Serbs in Kosovo a lethal window of opportunity to carry forward their ethnic cleansing activities.

Second, and in conjunction with a more aggressive NATO forward operating presence, the allies must accelerate their efforts to field common systems and increase interoperability. This does not mean that the United States should become an open-ended pipeline for the transfer of technology to our NATO allies, but there are basic military tools that should be available to, and designated for, NATO operations.

Third, the Kosovo operation should be the genesis for a top-to-bottom review of the NATO decisionmaking process. While the system seems to be working reasonably well considering that it is a conflict being fought by committee, there is no doubt in my mind that decisionmaking must be streamlined. It is, for example, far too cumbersome to give each of the member nations veto power over the list of military targets. It may be well for NATO to consider establishing subgroups of responsibility defined operationally and perhaps even geographically. At all costs, NATO should not blunder into the decisionmaking no-man's-land that has paralyzed the effectiveness of the United Nations.

And finally, NATO should continue to engage Russia as a vital partner in its quest for stability and security, and redouble it efforts to bring other former Soviet bloc nations into the alliance once they have met NATO membership criteria. This is the time to