

U.S. COMMITTEE TO EXPAND NATO

1150 17TH STREET, N.W., SUITE 1250, WASHINGTON, D.C. 20036
TELEPHONE: (202) 862-5830 • FAX: (202) 862-5874

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NATO ENLARGEMENT & RUSSIA

As the North Atlantic Alliance takes its historic step of enlargement, it is simultaneously engaged in a dialogue with Russia to ensure a cooperative relationship with Moscow in building a new Europe that is undivided, secure, and free. This dialogue has produced a series of mutual understandings and reassurances that should ensure, for example, that the achievements of arms limitation that marked the end of the Cold War will continue. This dialogue culminated in the summit-level signing, in Paris on May 27, of the NATO-Russia "Founding Act". As President Clinton declared at the signing, NATO "will work with Russia, not against it. And by reducing the rivalry and fear, by strengthening peace and cooperation, by facing common threats to the security of all democracies, NATO will promote greater stability in all of Europe, including Russia".

NATO's enlargement cannot threaten Russia. NATO has always been a defensive alliance, and it poses no offensive military threat. Nor does enlargement aim at anything other than consolidating the stability and security of a region whose *instability* and *insecurity* have propelled all of Europe--and the world into so many cataclysms in this century. To foreclose, once and for all, future ambiguities or power vacuums or crises over Central and Eastern Europe is a service to wider European and global peace. Russia is invited to be a partner in this enterprise, in collaboration with the Atlantic Alliance.

Russia's future relations with the West will depend on the statesmanship with which all sides approach future challenges that may arise. Opportunities for cooperation will be many--witness Bosnia. The future of Russia's democracy rests with Russia's people and leaders; it will depend above all on their ability to confront their many internal challenges, from corruption to job creation. The Russian people, surveys indicate, are not opposed to NATO enlargement; they are focused on domestic issues such as jobs, housing, and crime.

President Clinton has also made clear that the new Permanent Joint Council created by the "Founding Act" gives Russia a voice but not a veto in NATO's own deliberations, which take place in the North Atlantic Council. Nor does anything in the "Founding Act" or any other document diminish the Alliance's right or ability to defend its members or its interests as it deems necessary.

As Secretary of State Madeline Albright told the Senate Armed Services Committee on April 23, 1997: "In this new Europe, the United States and Western Europe have a chance to gain new allies and partners who can and will contribute to our common security. The people of Central Europe have a chance to see the erasure of a Cold War dividing line that has cut them off from the European mainstream. The people of Russia have a chance to achieve the deepest and most genuine integration with the West that their nation has ever enjoyed."