

## USIS EFFORTS TO PROMOTE NATO ENLARGEMENT

Here are some of the activities we have undertaken in the past year or so in support of NATO enlargement. (It should not be forgotten that other mission elements, particularly the military elements and the political section, have done much in support of NATO enlargement.)

Media programs: Post-initiated and USIA Washington-initiated programs have played a noticeable role in the discussion of NATO enlargement. For example, last spring we funded an DUNA-TV crew's trip to the U.S. and Brussels to tape a documentary on NATO for May broadcast. In April, in cooperation with the USIA Foreign Press Center, we arranged for Hungarian national TV to do a NATO segment on their news feature program "Panorama." We are still working with Hungarian national radio on an ambitious idea of devoting 6-7 hours of national radio programming to NATO enlargement for broadcast in November 1997, shortly before the NATO referendum.. We have done a number of satellite interviews which resulted in American policymakers or the Ambassador appearing on the evening news. In July we did a three-site digital videoconference (Washington-Brussels-Budapest) with well-known experts discussing how to involve the public in the decision to join NATO. There are many more examples I could offer of media programming on the NATO issue.

VIP and speaker programming: Besides our own Ambassador, who has done many interviews and speeches on NATO enlargement and many other topics, we have made extensive use of visiting American VIPS to further public understanding of the NATO issue. For example, we have arranged press conferences and interviews for Sen. Ted Stevens, Rep. Tom Lantos, Rep. John Murtha, Sen. Richard Lugar, Sen. Daniel Inoué, Gen. Shalikashvili (and other senior US military in Europe) and many others. We have done four exclusive WORLDNET interactives with Hungarian national TV, resulting in national TV coverage of our interviewee. We have done four speaker (Ampart) programs on security issues/NATO enlargement this fiscal year, and are providing speakers for several fall conferences, such as the one on "The Meaning of Atlanticism" planned by the Hungarian Atlantic Council.

Information outreach: We supply, via the Information Resources Center (IRC), a steady stream of documents and reports to various parts of the bureaucracy and parliament, both for their information and occasionally to use as models for drafting legislation. For example, when the US and Hungary were working on the so-called Omnibus Agreement, a comprehensive enlargement of the current SOFA under which US Forces operate in Hungary, various elements of DOD provided vast amounts of material to the Hungarian government about how similar agreements work in other countries, but our IRC also provided much raw material on how other NATO members treat each other in such areas as taxation, customs, and overflights. Another initiative was the creation of a web home page for the whole embassy, which carries a great deal of material about U.S. policy regarding NATO and SFOR. We included links to NATO, SHAPE, SFOR Bosnia, the State Department, the White House, among others. We provide access via the home page to the many Wireless File stories relating to NATO enlargement. We distribute the Wireless File in hard copy to 115 opinion makers around town.

We introduced the players to each other: Sensing that the various players on the NATO enlargement issue did not know each other, we have served as matchmakers. For example, in February 1997 we held a huge "NATO Party" at the PAO's house with the overt purpose of bringing together bureaucrats, journalists, parliamentarians, party staffers, and local government officials who are involved with NATO enlargement in some way. Also included were a phalanx of U.S. military, including the Taszar base commander and some of his senior officers. Journalists in particular welcomed the NATO party because they learned of the existence of more people to call for answers or comments. We are repeating the event September 17, using the visit of a USNATO-escorted NATO tour as a centerpiece.

We have worked hard to keep NATO enlargement from being a party issue: For example, in our January 1997 NATO tour, we invited only opposition party parliamentarians. With the political section, we have met with the parliamentarians and senior party staff of every opposition party. Through SEED grants and our own program grants, we have financially assisted think tanks -- such as the Manfred Woerner Foundation, the Hungarian Atlantic Council, and the Hungarian Policy Institute -- affiliated with different parties.

We have worked intensively to create and maintain a positive media climate in which NATO enlargement will be debated: We have fostered links with journalists via NATO tours, facilitators, USIA TV Co-ops, USIS Budapest program grants, contacts by the Press Section, IV and VV programs. Many journalists -- more than one hundred -- have been on our training programs to teach objective, fact-based reporting. We pro-actively contact journalists to be sure they have the best information in writing their stories. For example, in a recent story, a journalist took a senior MFA official to task for being unable to explain why Hungary needed 30 new combat jets. "Why not 15?" the reporter asked, "why not 5?" We contacted the reporter and put him in touch with US officers who could explain how force structure is designed in the American military and in NATO. We provided him with material from our IRC which showed how, if you want five aircraft always on call over a given target, you need five on the way, five on the way back, fifteen in varying stages of getting ready for the mission, two as training aircraft, etc.

Our exchanges programs have helped created a cadre of opinion leaders familiar with NATO enlargement:

- NATO tours: Since Hungary was added to the NATO tour program after the political transformation here, we have sent roughly 100 parliamentarians, key journalists, and senior bureaucrats on the program. In the past year, we successfully lobbied USNATO for special extra tours, and we funded two more out of USIS Budapest funds. The result is that many top opinion leaders on our NATO tours. For example, the chairman of the Parliamentary Defense Committee Imre Mecs and all members of the Defense Committee have gone. So have key members of the finance and foreign affairs committees, as well as virtually all parliamentarians with any interest in security issues. We have built tremendous links with all parties, both the two governing parties and the five opposition parties. For example, MDF's representative on the parliamentary defense committee --

Geno Poda, who was deputy state secretary in the Ministry of Defense under the previous (MDF-led) government, called to ask us to help arrange and participate in a town meeting in his district to discuss the NATO enlargement issue with his constituents. Lastly, because of the intense interest in Hungary as the only country in Eastern Europe or the former Soviet states with a permanent American military presence, we now host many "inbound" NATO tours organized by other embassies; we have hosted this year groups from France, Turkey, Sweden, Denmark, Greece, Romania, Bosnia, Russia, Germany, and other countries.

- International Visitor/Voluntary Visitor/Fulbright: Our traditional exchanges programs have helped create a body of analysts, journalists, and bureaucrats familiar with US foreign policy. Many of these people are involved in writing or broadcasting pro-NATO stories, or in talking to the media. For example, a recent Fulbrighter returned from her two year Fulbright stint at SAIS to become the consultant for a Duna-TV documentary on NATO. We are about to send to the States a group of mayors from cities near our base. The former Hungarian foreign minister, twice a Fulbright lecturer, now heads a pro-NATO think-tank, the Hungarian Atlantic Council. The director of the Council took his Ph.D at Ohio University under the Fulbright program. The parliamentarians who represent MDF and the FKG on the Defense Committee, both NATO tour veterans, are soon scheduled for International Visitor grants.

Through our media training programs, we have fostered expertise in covering foreign affairs issues: Well over a hundred Hungarians have been on our media training programs, either in the U.S. or in Hungary. We have explained how to go after a story, how to "work the bureaucracy" to get the access they need, how to get information from libraries and government information offices. The result is that we are covered somewhat better than in the past, though there is much yet to be done.

As a mission, we have worked closely with the Hungarian Government to help it get involved in explaining NATO enlargement to the people: Since mid-1996, senior Embassy officials and senior Hungarian officials meet periodically to review the SFOR deployment and NATO enlargement questions. In those meetings, the Embassy has persistently lobbied the government that it must work hard to build popular support for NATO enlargement, because Hungarian ratification of an admission offer cannot simply be handed down to the people from the policy-making elite (as could have been done in the past.) Initially we focused on helped persuade the government to conduct a pro-active media strategy. This took several months of "selling," but last December the government became energized, and now scarcely a day passes without two or three media stories on NATO sourced to the GOH. The government also became convinced -- partly at our urging -- to create a specific NATO outreach office; this was created within the Foreign Ministry at the first of the year and received a budget of roughly \$600,000 to promote newspaper supplements, TV programs, and other public information material on NATO enlargement. We have established outstanding cooperative relations with the press departments

of the foreign and defense ministries, with the NATO bureaus of both ministries, and with the offices that conduct the government's public opinion polling.

Grants programs: Just two examples here. We gave a SEED grant to the Manfred Woerner Foundation, headed by parliamentarian Tamas Wachsler, a leading defense specialist, so that the foundation could undertake public education on the NATO enlargement issue. We recently signed another grant to the Hungarian Atlantic Council to establish 10 "councils on foreign relations" in regional Hungarian cities, provide briefing and discussion materials on foreign policy issues to the local councils, and create materials for secondary school teachers to use to teach the issue in their classes.

We have provided help to IFOR/SFOR in shaping their public affairs program to enhance the image of the American military presence here. This has been perhaps the biggest public affairs task we have had -- at least during the period between the fall of 1995 and mid-1996 while IFOR was "settling in" -- but it has been one of the most productive in its favorable effect on the public's view of NATO enlargement: Since December 1995, we have spent much effort tracking what is written and broadcast both in Budapest and non-Budapest media about SFOR, alerting SFOR to the media play, and assisting them in dealing swiftly with any adverse publicity. More importantly, we have helped them with their public outreach program. For example, SFOR and the Embassy's Office of Defense Assistance have refurbished and donated excess US equipment taken from closed US bases throughout Europe. We have worked with the media to gain much positive publicity. We developed a list of 300 journalists who are "cleared" visit our base at Taszar for coverage. Some reporters go weekly. We arranged for groups of parliamentarians and others to visit the US-run firing range at Taborfalva, Hungary, to view tanks and Bradley fighting vehicles in gunnery training before the units return to their SFOR missions in Bosnia. We have worked with Taszar to educate other groups, such as the North Atlantic Assembly, small groups of Hungarian parliamentarians, and visiting groups from other NATO countries about the excellent cooperation between the Hungarian and American militaries. The bottom line is that support for SFOR equates well with support for NATO enlargement. Overall Hungarian support for NATO enlargement is a little above 50% at present. It is about 65% in Somogy County, where our Taszar base is located. It is 71% among people who have actually met an SFOR American, whether by visiting the base during an open house, viewing a donation to a school, watching soldiers repair a school, and so forth. To sell SFOR is to sell NATO, at least in Hungary.

Drafter: WMorgan:G:\BILL\NATOENL3.WMM



September 11, 1997

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Ambassador

THROUGH: DCM - Lynne Lambert

FROM: USIS - Bill Morgan

SUBJECT: NATO enlargement: where we stand; what to do now

Where we stand: The referendum on NATO membership will take place in mid-to-late November. The Hungarian government is still trying to fix the date, and even decide the exact wording of the questions. The referendum will actually ask the voters to decide two issues: (1) NATO membership, and (2) whether Hungary should allow foreigners to own agricultural land.

Polling reveals solid support for NATO enlargement among the population as a whole. In the last comprehensive poll, a mid-June Gallup poll commissioned by the Defense Ministry, 61% said they supported NATO membership, 27% opposed it, and 12% were undecided. The 61% pro-NATO figure is the highest ever, and represents a big increase from earlier polls. In 1996, several polls showed roughly 50% support, 25% opposed, and 25% undecided. However, beginning last fall we began to see a gradual increase in support for NATO membership. In March 1997, a USIA poll recorded a 55% support level, and the June 1997 Gallup poll showed a 61% support rate for NATO membership.

There are several reasons for the rise in public support. First, both our Embassy and, beginning around the first of the year, the Hungarian government, have conducted vigorous public affairs efforts. A brief overview of recent Embassy public affairs programming is attached. In addition to Embassy efforts, the superb civic affairs and press activities of the U.S. military at Taszar and elsewhere helped build outstanding base-community relations and showed the Hungarian people that NATO troops were not the same as the Soviet occupiers. Third, other NATO allies, such as the British and the Germans, have carried out successful public affairs efforts. Fourth, the intense media coverage of the run-up to the Madrid Summit focused public attention on NATO enlargement.

However, in the near term, we probably cannot expect a further increase in Hungarian public support for NATO membership. Gallup noted that opposition to NATO -- chiefly less educated people and older people who lived through a half century of constant warnings about NATO -- has remained constant at about a quarter of the population. Many older people are also worried that the cost of NATO enlargement for Hungary will force the government to cut social security and medical benefits. These opponents to NATO membership will be extremely difficult to convince in the short term. Gallup also noted that the undecided category never falls below 10%

in polls of this type. Therefore, Gallup concluded, support for NATO will probably remain between 55% and 61% for the near future. USIA will conduct another comprehensive poll in late September and early October.

What to do now?: a pre-referendum public affairs strategy: Because of the work done up to now, we are in good shape. During the past year, the public has been educated adequately about the meaning of NATO membership, and the media coverage has steadily grown more extensive. For months, there has been a torrent of media stories about NATO enlargement. Nearly all of these are positive. Journalists tend to be educated people, and polls show that the higher the level of education, the higher the support for NATO enlargement. It is also important to note that there is no powerful organization opposed to NATO enlargement. All parliamentary parties support it, as do virtually all other influential institutions. Only the pacifist Alba Kor and the fringe Workers' Party oppose NATO membership.

Fundamentally, our public affairs strategy has worked well. We should continue the pro-active activities that have paid off up to now, including:

- Sticking to the broad themes that the U.S. supports NATO enlargement in general and Hungarian membership specifically, that we wish to be helpful to Hungary in joining NATO and other international bodies, but that the actual decision to join NATO -- the referendum -- should be taken by Hungarians themselves
- sending influential Hungarian on NATO tours (such as the recent tour for officials working on the Hungarian defense budget)
- educating "inbound" NATO tours from other embassies and from USNATO (such as the group of 15 journalists and defense analysts coming from other NATO countries next week)
- carefully-selected interviews and media activities in support of NATO membership by yourself and senior officers of the mission
- facilitating and, where appropriate, funding TV and radio documentaries and features as well as print stories (such as the USIS-sponsored "NATO Day" on Hungarian national radio)
- sending embassy officers and visiting officials to participate in Hungarian-organized events aimed at educating the public and the media (such as the Gyor conference to which Colonel Szurgyi contributed so much)
- digital video conferences with Hungarian media on this end and an American official in Brussels or Washington

- USIA WORLDNET interactives, featuring senior administration officials, with Hungarian National Television

The problem of the dual referendum: The linking of the NATO membership issue with the hot issue of foreign ownership of agricultural land is troublesome because, so far, we cannot foresee the effects of the linkage on voter turnout. However, the population as a whole supports NATO enlargement, and surveys of likely voters show that support among that group is even higher than among the population. At the end of August, an Ipsos-Szondos poll showed that three-quarters of likely voters favored NATO membership. However, there is the danger that the land issue, about which many people have strong emotions, will bring out to the polls a larger-than-usual number of voters with nationalist or even somewhat anti-foreign sentiments. A counter-argument is that pro-NATO voters will sense danger, and turn out in greater numbers than if approval of NATO membership was a foregone conclusion. On balance, a high voter turnout would be helpful. A high voter participation rate is also desirable for non-partisan reasons; it would show that citizens are participating in the national-making. This democratic idea -- that citizens have both a right and an obligation to participate -- is worth supporting for its own sake. Lastly, though the dual referendum makes pro-NATO supporters a bit nervous, it should not be forgotten that the Horn government's credibility -- probably the prime minister's re-election as well -- depends on winning the referendum on NATO membership. We expect that the government will do all that is necessary to maintain support for NATO among the population and to turn out pro-NATO voters.

What NOT to do now: We must avoid being too intrusive. To this point, the public has rightly perceived us as actively informing people about U.S. foreign policy and publicizing the American SFOR mission. Though we are clearly seen as the most important actor in the NATO enlargement debate, we have not been so intrusive that we are seen as unwelcome meddlers in a Hungarian political decision. At all costs, we must avoid such a level of activity that the public begins to see the NATO referendum as more about the United States than about the alliance as a whole. Lastly, we must take particular care not to give opponents of NATO enlargement any arguments to use against us, whether they be inept responses to media queries or incidents involving SFOR, which could be blown out of proportion by opponents of NATO membership..

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