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THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary
(Madrid, Spain)

For Immediate Release

July 8, 1997

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
TO THE AMERICAN EMBASSY COMMUNITY

American Embassy
Madrid, Spain

6:05 P.M. (L)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen. I thank all of you for being here, for all the service that you have given either through this Embassy or through our NATO mission. Whether you are an American working for some branch of the United States government, or a foreign national who has contributed to our success here, we're very grateful to you.

And I thank those of you who have brought your children. I thank you for doing that because, after all, what we are celebrating today are actions taken to make the future of these children more secure, more rich, more full of promise, more dependent upon their own abilities and not the whims of some dictator who would seek to advance the cause of his or her power at the expense of their dreams. So I'm very, very glad to see all of you here today.

Let me begin by thanking our delegation. I thank Secretary Albright for bringing her personal life story and her vision into her work every day. I thank Secretary Cohen for his leadership at the Defense Department and for helping us to prove that our politics can still stop at the water's edge and we can work across party lines to do what's right for America.

I thank the members of this distinguished congressional delegation -- the chairman of the delegation, Senator Roth, who spoke today on behalf of parliamentarians in all the NATO countries; Senator Biden, who had to leave; Senator Mikulski; Senator Smith; and Congressmen Gilman, Solomon, Gejdenson and Sisisky -- I thank them for coming, members of both parties in
both Houses of Congress, proving that we are united on this issue.

Let me also say a special word of thanks to our distinguished Ambassador, Dick Gardner, for the fine job he has done here for the last four years. He and Danielle have done very well, and we will always be grateful for their service. (Applause.) I also thank them for their astonishing hospitality to me, to Hillary, to our family, and to many others who have come to Spain in search of peace and beauty -- and just being happy tourists. We're very grateful to you for all that you've done.

I want to say a special word of thanks to Ambassador Hunter and the NATO Mission for all they have done to make this a success. All of you know what happened today. We bridged a chasm in history and began a journey to a new Europe and a new century by inviting Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary to join NATO, and making clear that the door is open for others to follow. We have taken a giant stride in our efforts to create a Europe that is undivided, democratic and at peace literally for the first time since the rise of the nation state on the European continent.

There has never been a time when the entire continent was not divided, was democratic and was at peace. All three conditions have never prevailed on this continent at the same time. We have a chance to make it so now. It's a result of hard work by all the members of the Alliance. This is not an American achievement, this is a NATO achievement. Every country had its say. The statement we released today and the decision we made was a genuine consensus effort. And I am profoundly grateful to all of my fellow world leaders who are part of NATO.

I also would say to the people of Poland and Hungary and the Czech Republic, your heroism made this day possible. Through long years of darkness, you kept alive the hope of freedom. I still remember the Hungarian Uprising of 1956, the Prague Spring of 1968, the Gdansk Shipyards in 1981. But we also appreciate the fact that when these three nations threw off the shackles of tyranny, they embraced democracy and tolerance. They devoted themselves to reforming their economies and their societies, to settling age-old disputes with their neighbors. They have done the hard work of freedom now for over seven years, and they have proved that they are ready to share in the full responsibility of NATO membership.

They have also set an extraordinary example for the other new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe. From the northwest to the southeast corner of Europe, we see other
countries now engaged in partnerships with us through the Partnership for Peace, also interested in being considered for NATO membership. These three nations have paved the way for others to follow. They have paved the way by showing that with a long-term commitment to strengthening democracy and reforming an economy, to settling ancient quarrels, a nation can become a full partner in that free, peaceful, undivided Europe. And I am very grateful.

We actually did three things here. First, we made NATO stronger by taking in new members and making clear that others will be allowed to come in the future. And we will continue to work to make sure we can meet the challenges of tomorrow. Second, we’re working to adapt NATO internally to meet the new challenges of tomorrow, not the old ones of yesterday. And there will be more responsibility for Europeans in a separate security defense initiative.

The third thing we’re doing is reaching out to have more partners. You know we signed this historic agreement with Russia. Tomorrow there will be another historic signing with Ukraine. We have over two dozen countries in the Partnership for Peace that are working with us in Bosnia and in other ways, and they will be permitted to have a political arm through a partnership council that will give them a greater say over decisions that they will be expected to participate in.

This is a very great day, not only for Europe and the United States, not simply for NATO, but, indeed, for the cause of freedom in the aftermath of the Cold War. And every one of you who had anything to do with it, and every one of you who has a child with a big stake in it, should be very happy and very proud. Thank you very much. (Applause.)

END

6:08 P.M. (L)
I thank Ambassador Gardner for his distinguished service to our nation under three Presidents. I also thank him, Danielle and all of the embassy staff for the tremendous job you have done to make our visit so wonderful. Hillary and I are deeply grateful for your efforts.

On behalf of all Americans, I also want you to know how much we appreciate the tireless work of the Madrid Embassy, Ambassador Hunter and our NATO Mission to make this summit a success. Because each of you went the extra distance, our meetings here have achieved what we hoped for -- and the United States and Europe will reap profound benefits for many years to come.

Today in Madrid, we have bridged a chasm in history and begun a journey to a new Europe in a new century.

For nearly five decades, our Atlantic Alliance has sacrificed to create a Europe undivided, democratic and at peace for the first time ever. Now, by inviting Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary to join NATO and opening the door for others to follow, we are taking our greatest
stride toward that goal. We are advancing the values we cherish -- freedom, democracy and security -- and lighting a path to the stability and peace of the 21st century.

The action we have taken today is the culmination of three and a half years of hard work by all the members of the Alliance. Together, we have shown that our community of shared values and interests -- unrivaled in all of history -- has the vision and energy to meet the challenges of a radically changed world.

To the people of Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic, let me say: Your heroism made this day possible. Through the long years of darkness, you kept alive the defiant hope of freedom -- in the Hungarian uprising in 1956...the Prague Spring in 1968...and the Gdansk shipyards in 1981. When you threw off the shackles of tyranny in 1989, you embraced democracy and tolerance, not some new autocracy or vengeance. You devoted yourselves to settling age-old disputes with neighbors. You committed yourselves to the hard road of political and economic reform...and to the demanding tasks of bringing your militaries up to NATO’s standards. You set an extraordinary example of the strength of the human spirit for all of Europe’s new democracies and nations around the world.

Your success will also pave the way so others can follow. Already, other Central European nations are strengthening their democratic institutions, opening up their economies, resolving ancient quarrels with other countries. Across this continent, the desire to overcome division and build an enduring peace continues to grow. NATO will continue its work to heal divisions and
create that peace. That is why NATO’s door will remain open and the first new members will not be the last ones.

Now, we are taking an Alliance that has guaranteed our security for almost 50 years and recreating it to meet the challenges of the next 50 years and beyond.

First, we are making NATO stronger. With Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary, NATO will increase its military capabilities, making us better prepared for all future challenges to transatlantic security.

Second, we are adapting NATO internally to better face the missions of the coming century. NATO will be streamlined, more flexible and restructured to enable our European allies to take charge of European contingencies.

Third, we are reaching out to secure peace beyond the Alliance’s borders. In May, we signed The Founding Act with Russia creating partnership where not so long ago there was conflict. Tomorrow, we will hold the first summit-level meeting of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, deepening our ties with the 27 members of the Partnership for Peace. And we will sign a charter that will create a strong, new relationship between NATO and Ukraine -- a nation whose independence, prosperity and security are essential for a stable and peaceful Europe.

Fifty years ago, as he led our nation to embrace peacetime engagement in Europe, President Truman told the American people that we had great power -- and therefore a great responsibility
-- to work so that the “men and women of all the world can move out of the shadows of fear and war and into the light of freedom and peace.” The achievements of NATO here in Madrid are a capstone on this century’s efforts to fulfill that sacred responsibility -- and a cornerstone for a century of possibility about to dawn.

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Acknowledgments: Secretary Albright
Ambassador & Mrs. Gardner
Embassy staff and families
Members of the American Community

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Today in Madrid, we have bridged a chasm in history and begun a journey to a new and better era.

For nearly five decades, our Atlantic Alliance has sacrificed to create a Europe undivided, democratic and at peace for the first time ever. Now, by inviting Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary to join NATO and opening the door for others to follow, we are taking our greatest stride toward that goal. We are advancing the values we cherish -- freedom, democracy and security -- and lighting a path to the stability and peace of the 21st century.
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create that peace. That is why NATO’s door will remain open and the first new members will not
be the last ones.
Now, we are taking an Alliance that has guaranteed our security for almost 50 years and recreating it to meet the challenges of the next 50 years and beyond.

First, we are making NATO stronger. With Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary, NATO will increase its military capabilities, making us better prepared for all future challenges to transatlantic security. [I am also delighted that NATO's strength will be further enhanced as our host country, Spain, takes its place in the integrated military command.]

Second, we are adapting NATO internally to better face the missions of the coming century. NATO will be streamlined, more flexible and restructured to enable our European allies to take charge of European contingencies.

Third, we are reaching out to secure peace beyond the Alliance's borders. In May, we signed The Founding Act with Russia creating partnership where not so long ago there was conflict. Tomorrow, we will hold the first summit-level meeting of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, deepening our ties with the 27 members of the Partnership for Peace. And we will sign a charter that will create a strong, new relationship between NATO and Ukraine -- a nation whose independence, prosperity and security are essential for a stable and peaceful Europe.

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Today is first and foremost a great day for the 16 allies, who have come together to make significant, wise and difficult decisions, creating a new NATO for a new Europe.

But it is also important for all the peoples of Europe. Our goal has been to create a Euro-Atlantic community based on shared values, strengthened democracy, and widespread prosperity. And one that overcomes the divisions of the past and clearly limits the risks of new divisions. What we have decided today in Madrid will encourage greater well-being for all of the peoples of Europe.

European Stability has long been a bipartisan goal in the U.S., as shown by the tremendous bipartisan support we have received from Senators Roth and Biden and the other members of the Senate NATO Observers Group that have accompanied us here.

This is particularly gratifying for me. I have long believed that the Alliance should not stand still, as I described in January of 1994, but that NATO enlargement was essential to promote and enhance security into the next century.
Even after deciding to begin the admission of three new countries today, NATO must continue to be open to further enlargement when the time comes for other countries.

But creating a new NATO is more than enlargement: We approached this summit with the understanding that European security depends on the ability of all its institutions -- NATO, the OSCE and EU -- to work together and perform new roles in areas of crisis such as in Bosnia. NATO has also extended other aspects of external adaptation -- reaching out to new partners, in the EAPC and enhanced PFP, and has created new relationships with former foes like Russia.

Adapting itself internally as well NATO has begun to reduce and change its force structure consistent with new missions and to give European allies a greater role.

The challenge we face may no longer be only direct aggression by opponents, but threats to stability, to our way of life, to the common peace. Our job is to reshape our institutions to meet those threats.

Is today the end of the process? No it is not. In many ways it is just the beginning, and we cannot lay down the burden.