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JBANC Testifies in Congress on Foreign Operations Budget Items

Washington, DC (JBANC) - Karl Altau, Managing Director of the Joint Baltic American National Committee, Inc. (JBANC) appeared on April 2 as a witness before the Subcommittee on Foreign Operations of the House Appropriations Committee. He spoke on behalf of the Central and East European Coalition (CEEC) for that organization’s support of “active U.S. engagement” in Central and Eastern Europe. The CEEC is an umbrella organization of 18 nationwide ethnic organizations, including JBANC, uniting more than 22 million voting Americans.

The hearing, held in the Capitol, is part of House debate on the FY 2004 Budget dealing with International Assistance programs.

Foreign Operations Subcommittee Chairman Jim Kolbe (R-AZ), a member of the House Baltic Caucus, led the meeting. Other members participating were Ranking Member Nita Lowey (D-NY) and subcommittee member Mark Kirk (R-IL).

Military funding to countries designated by the

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BALTIC BROADCASTS AND U.S. PRESTIGE
Chairman’s Corner by Janis Bolsteins

If left unchallenged, the Bush Administration’s Office of Management and Budget (OMB) will succeed in closing down all Baltic language broadcasts of the Voice of America (VOA) and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) later this year. The OMB, drafters of the annual U.S. Government budget, has simply red-lined all funds for the Baltic services for the new fiscal year. It is a premature move, penny-wise and pound-foolish.

While the broadcasts of the two stations no longer have to carry the weight they did in the dark days of the USSR, they still have currency and a sizeable following. The services should be continued at least until Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are entrenched as full-fledged members of NATO. That happy occasion is not yet at hand and there is much happening in the world that could complicate and perhaps stall this latest round of NATO expansion.

U.S. Congressional action will be needed to reinstate the budgets of the Baltic services. The required amount of funds is comparatively small, only a few million dollars for the six services for the coming year. All the services have been gradually reduced over the past decade, both in terms of staff and broadcast times, and it is appropriate for that to have happened. After all, the Baltics are no longer captive nations, but vibrant new democracies with a hearty, but still nascent free press.

The services should not be shut down and spirited away in the darkness of night, as would happen if the OMB had its way. Instead, when VOA's and RFE/RL’s time to close is really at hand, they should be given a grand send-off, commensurate with the leading-edge role they and their listeners in the Baltic states played in the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

There are other salient reasons for keeping the stations operative a while longer. One is the fact that U.S. influence in the region will suffer by the abrupt, almost secretive, withdrawal of these reputable and overt instruments of American prestige. Let’s keep in mind that U.S. prestige throughout much of the world was recently at a low point and should not be needlessly jeopardized. This concept may be lost on the OMB; hopefully it will not be lost on the U.S. Congress.

And, where the U.S. moves out, Russia moves in. Moscow has recently taken steps to increase its electronic presence in selected parts of Europe, the Baltics included. Through radio and TV broadcasts on the First Baltic channel, the Russian government is feeding into the area a steady stream of anti-NATO and anti-European Union messages. In combating this misinformation and continuing to serve as an example of journalistic integrity, the Baltic language services of VOA and RFE/RL still have a role to play a while longer.
NATO Enlargement Ratification Vote Nears

By all accounts, the NATO enlargement ratification process is heading for a successful conclusion. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee is scheduled to vote on the accession of the seven candidate countries on April 30. Possible consideration of the Treaty before the full Senate could take place during the week of May 5-9. With the war in Iraq winding down, no delays in the process are foreseen. The signing of the Protocols of Accession by the seven invited candidate countries, including Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, took place in Brussels on March 26. The Protocols have hence been transmitted to the NATO member countries for ratification. President Bush formally sent the Protocols to the Senate on April 11.

NATO enlargement ratification has almost become a foregone conclusion. Three years ago, the prospects did not seem as obvious, but the changing world situation and the persistence of its believers have fostered an almost natural evolution of the process, supplemented by supportive congressional legislation.

In March and April, a series of hearings on NATO enlargement have been held, as the Senate moves closer to a decisive vote. The Senate Foreign Relations committee has held four hearings on NATO enlargement and the Armed Services committee two. A fifth SFRC hearing with Secretary of State Colin Powell is being held on April 29. Originally scheduled for March 25, a still-hot war in Iraq necessitated postponement of the hearing.

Other Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearings featured a wide selection of experts on the issue, including Robert Bradtke, Deputy Assistant Secretary for European and Eurasian Affairs at the Department of State, Ian Brzezinski, Deputy Assistant Secretary for European and NATO Affairs at the Department of Defense (March 27); U.S. NATO Ambassador Nicholas Burns, Ronald Asmus, Bruce Jackson (April 1); Stephen Larrabee, Janusz Bugajski, Jeff Simon (April 3); Marc Grossman, Gen. Wesley Clark, and William Kristol (April 8).

Armed Services Committee hearing witnesses included: Under Secretaries Marc Grossman and Douglas Feith, from, respectively, the State and Defense Departments (March 27) and Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, Supreme Allied Commander in Europe, General James Jones, USMC, and Gen. Peter Pace, USMC, Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (April 10).

During the hearings, most of the focus was on issues related to the cohesion of NATO leading up to the war with Iraq – primarily regarding relations with allies France, Germany and Turkey.

Following the hearings, the Senate vote appears truly to be just around the corner. There is wide bipartisan support in all corners of the Senate. The minds of Baltic-Americans were made up a long time ago. A successful petition campaign, with 25,000 signatures collected by individuals and organizations around the country and in all 50 states and presented to the White House on September 10, 2001, only reinforced the publics support and determination to see enlargement include Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

On March 21, JBANC sent a letter to Members of Congress on the eve of the Senate hearings asking for support for enlargement and pointing out how far Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania have come in their partnership with the United States. The letter was submitted for the Congressional Record at the time of the March 27 SFRC hearing, chaired by Sen. George Allen (R-VA).

Two NATO member countries have already ratified the NATO Treaty: Canada and Norway. Following the vote of the U.S. Senate, the legislatures of the remaining 16 member countries will have to do the same.
JBANC’s fifth conference on Baltic Security: “Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania in NATO: Building Trans-Atlantic Security”, took place in Washington from March 6-8, 2003. High-level officials from the White House, State Department and Congress participated along with nearly 200 guests from across the United States and Europe. The main message of the conference was clear - no obstacles are seen as impeding the enlargement of NATO to include Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. This message was also evident from the statements of high-ranking officials from the Baltic countries who participated at the conference.

The three-day conference concluded with a keynote dinner presentation by former Lithuanian President Valdas Adamkus. His address (available online at: http://jbanc.org/adamkusmar8.html) echoed the strong spirit of Transatlantic cooperation shared by the United States and the three Baltic countries.

The main conference day was opened by Mati Kõiva, as outgoing JBANC President, who welcomed the gathered attendees. Ambassadors Sven Jürgenson (Embassy of Estonia), Vygaudas Usackas (Embassy of Lithuania), along with Latvian Embassy Deputy Chief of Mission Janis Eichmanis also greeted conference participants on behalf of their respective governments. Chairman Vello Ederma introduced the program and reminded those gathered that (Continued on page 8)
On March 26, 2003, foreign ministers of seven NATO invitees gathered in Brussels for a ceremony that JBANC and Baltic Americans have been fighting for about ten years. In the presence of the nineteen NATO ambassadors, the seven - Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Bulgaria and Romania – signed that day the Protocols of Accession. The Protocols will now be transmitted to the NATO member parliaments for ratification. Some claim that the process will take about a year, but others predict a faster resolution. In any case, there appears no doubt that the seven will become NATO members by the next NATO summit, scheduled for May 2004.

During JBANC’s Fifth Conference on Baltic Security, held in Washington this March, all officials emphasized that there appears to be no obstacles in the way to full membership in the world’s premier defense alliance. But they cautioned not to be overconfident.

JBANC’s conferences themselves show the road trodden. From the first, where the major aim was to reintroduce Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania to the American public after regained independence; to the last, where the theme was no longer even NATO membership, but the building of trans-Atlantic security. We have come a long way.

But this is no time to rest on our laurels. The U.S. Senate has to ratify the aforementioned Protocols of Accession. We need the urgent help of all Baltic Americans across the United States. Get in touch with your senators! We need a minimum of 67 votes out of 100. Poland, Hungary and Czech Republic got 80 in the recent first round of enlargement. Let’s try to beat that! Why not go for broke – all of 100?

Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, of course, know that NATO membership means a lot more than the NATO flag flying in the breeze of Tallinn, Riga and Vilnius. It means the responsibilities and obligations of being a NATO ally.

Membership also means making sure that the alliance remains intact, despite the surrounding turbulence, as it adjusts to new realities. Those who predict chaos and splits will be wrong. There will always be differences among the democracies. Now it will be the responsibility of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania as full NATO members to see to it that the alliance will remain strong and united.

Baltic Americans also expect that trans-Atlantic ties will remain strong, that differences will be overcome. Most important, that the United States will continue as NATO’s engine and that America will remain engaged in Europe.

That is why the Fifth JBANC Conference was titled: “Building Trans-Atlantic Security.” There will be no real security for the Baltics and Europe as a whole without the trans-Atlantic tie.

Security is the necessary ingredient for Baltic and European peace, for democracy and independence. Baltic Americans and JBANC remain the watchdogs of Baltic security.

Vello Ederma, former JBANC Chair
Changes in JBANC Board of Directors

**Vello Ederma** - has announced his retirement from the JBANC Board of Directors. As one of the representatives of the Estonian American National Council, Inc. (EANC) Mr. Ederma served as JBANC Chairman for the 1996-1997, 1999-2000 and 2002-2003 terms.

As a lifelong expert in foreign policy, public diplomacy and communications he feels that with the signing of the NATO Protocols of Accession, his efforts on behalf of the Baltic countries in Washington have borne fruit and it is time to move on. He joined JBANC at the very beginning of the NATO effort in 1994, after his retirement from the U.S. Information Agency and the Voice of America. He now intends to spend his time writing. He has promised to contribute articles to the JBANC Chronicle.

Mr. Ederma commented that during those times, as well as throughout his tenure on the Board, cooperation between the three Baltic American nationalities was exceptionally excellent and he thanks all involved for it. The unified effort of all on the Board and staff, he said, is what contributed to the success of JBANC.

The Board of Directors, along with JBANC staff, supporters and constituents thanks Mr. Ederma for his commitment and dedication throughout the last decade to JBANC and the Baltics and wishes him all the best in his future endeavors.

“Vello has been a great colleague,” said Janis Bolsteins, chairman of JBANC. “He will remain a true friend of the Baltics and he leaves a legacy of hard work and dedication that will not be forgotten and will be greatly missed.”

At the same time, the Board welcomes two new members, Dr. Ramunas Kondratas of the Lithuanian American Council, Inc. and Peteris Blumbergs of the American Latvian Association, Inc.

**Peteris Blumbergs** joins the JBANC board after serving as the Vice President of the American Latvian Association for the past five years. As a volunteer board member for ALA, Peteris was responsible for publications and political outreach.

His tenure at ALA was dominated by the NATO enlargement debate and he helped orchestrate numerous letter-writing campaigns and petition drives in support of the Baltic agenda. Peteris grew up in Chicago and obtained his Latvian education at Kris-

(Continued on page 14)
Joint Baltic American National Committee, Inc.

2003 BALTIC DEMOCRACY AWARD HONOREES

Sen. Barbara Mikulski (D - MD)  Sen. Richard J. Lugar (R - IN)

Tom Lantos (D-12 CA)  Doug Bereuter (R-1st NE)

In recognition of outstanding contributions in Congress to security, stability and democracy in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania
JBANC Holds Fifth Conference on Baltic Security

Continued from page 4

When the first JBANC conference was organized nearly a decade ago, the main theme was the introduction of the Baltic countries to an American audience and the recent restoration of their independence. No one would have ever guessed then that the Baltic countries would be joining NATO. Ederma added that when that notion of joining NATO appeared then on the horizon, JBANC made it its priority. Now, at the doorstep of NATO, we are very close to realizing our dream of a secure future for the Baltic countries. We have come so far that the emphasis of the conference was not about joining NATO but about NATO’s future and the role of the Baltic countries in this Alliance. Ederma added that we are now in a new era, in which the United States, the lone superpower, is the world’s only guarantor of peace and democracy. After that, Ederma read a greeting from Estonian Prime Minister Siim Kallas on the occasion of the conference acknowledging JBANC’s “determined effort” in building “political momentum” for Baltic NATO membership.

The conference opened on Thursday, March 6 with a seminar at the Department of Commerce sponsored by the Central and Eastern Europe Business Information Center (CEEBIC), in cooperation with the Estonian-American Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The topic for the seminar was “Commercial Opportunities in the Port Infrastructure Sector: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania”. Diplomats from the three Baltic embassies gave an overview of their respective country’s economic situations to a filled room. Additional speakers were CEEBIC Director Jay Burgess, Andrea Lupo from the U.S. Trade Development Agency and Juris Blodnieks, from the Latvian American Shipping Line, who gave his impressions of doing business in the region.

On Friday, March 7, the conference opened on Capitol Hill, in the prestigious Russell Senate Caucus Room. A briefing on NATO enlargement related issues by three congressional staff members was followed by presentations of JBANC’s 2003 Baltic Democracy Awards to four honorees Sen. Richard Lugar, Sen. Barbara Mikulski, Rep. Doug Bereuter and Rep. Tom Lantos (see page seven). Congressional staff aides Courtney Anderson, from the office of House Baltic Caucus co-chair Rep. John Shimkus (R-IL); Joni Higgins, from the office of Sen. George Voinovich (R-OH); and Dr. Michael Haltzel, from the Senate Foreign Relations European subcommittee Democratic office under Sen. Joe Biden (D-DE), all gave encouraging marks for the three countries and their NATO aspirations.

Continued on page 10
U.S. Capitol Lunch on Rebuilding Jewish Vilnius Sponsored by USBF

Lithuania’s Goal of NATO Membership Raised

Washington, DC - Emanuelis Zingeris, Chairman of the International Commission for the Evaluation of the Crimes of the Nazi and Soviet Occupation Regimes in Lithuania and Director of the Tolerance Center (Vilnius), was the guest of honor at a U.S.-Baltic Foundation (USBF) Ambassadors Council lunch on the subject of Rebuilding Jewish Vilnius on March 21 in the U.S. Capitol. Special guests included Vygaudas Usackas, Lithuanian Ambassador to the U.S. and Dr. Michael Haltzel of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee Staff, who introduced Mr. Zingeris. This program was sponsored by USBF, in cooperation with the Lithuanian Embassy.

Mr. Zingeris also made a three-day visit to Houston, Texas to deliver the Ruth Vinn Hendler Lack Lecture sponsored by the Holocaust Museum of Houston and USBF Board member Jonathan Lack. He also made presentations to the Lithuanian American Community of Houston, the local American Jewish Committee and the Student Forum at Rice University's James A. Baker Institute for Public Policy.

The historic city of Vilnius was once considered the Jerusalem of the North and served as a seat of Talmudic studies in earlier centuries. Much of Vilnius’ unique cultural heritage was destroyed during the Holocaust. The Soviet occupation of Lithuania delayed restoration for over fifty years. Now, the small Jewish community of Lithuania, with the assistance of the Lithuanian government and international supporters, has undertaken the ambitious project of restoring the architecture, institutions and historical legacy of Jewish Vilnius.

Emanuelis Zingeris is spearheading this broad-based restoration effort. He is a former member of Lithuania’s parliament where he served for three terms, and is a signatory of the March 11, 1990 declaration restoring that country’s independence. The son of Holocaust survivors, Mr. Zingeris was born in Kaunas, Lithuania in 1957. In 1989, Mr. Zingeris founded the Lithuanian Jewish Society. “One of the purposes of my visit is to help build bridges between the American Jewish

(Continued on page 15)
After dozens of visits to Senate and House offices in the afternoon, conference participants moved to the White House Conference Center. A surprise visit was made by Karl Rove, chief political adviser to President George W. Bush. In his comments, Rove said that President Bush has often recalled recent visits by Estonian Prime Minister Kallas and Latvian President Vaira Vike-Freiberga and their commitment to a common vision in opposing tyranny. Rove also stated the importance of the Baltic countries as partners of NATO and the United States, and that President Bush looks forward to close future cooperation.

This was also pointed out by Heather Conley, Deputy Assistant Secretary for European and Eurasian Affairs at the State Department and Dan Fried, Senior Director for European and Eurasian Affairs at the National Security Council. Both acknowledged the merits of the Baltic countries and their contributions in the name of freedom and democracy. Other presenters were Ambassador Randy Bell of the State Department, Jim Townsend, Director of NATO Policy at the Office of the U.S. Secretary of Defense and Walter Andrusyszyn of the NSC, who was also luncheon keynote speaker the following day.

Saturday’s panel discussions began with the topic “The Baltic Neighborhood and Russia”, in which positive future visions were shared by Baltic specialist Paul Goble and U.S. Committee on NATO President Bruce Jackson. The moderator was Vello Ederma. Long-time friend of the Baltics Goble emphasized that NATO remains the most important link between the Baltic countries and the United States. He asked those countries to weigh the importance of their security in terms of internal development, because they won’t have to worry so much about foreign policy in the future.

Following was a panel on the Future of NATO, moderated by Retired Maj. Gen. Tiiu Kera. Speakers were Deputy Assistant Secretary for European and Eurasian Affairs at the State Department Robert Bradtke, Stephen Flanagan, Director of the Institute for National Strategic Studies at the National Defense University and Radek Sikorski, Executive Director of the American Enterprise Institute’s New Atlantic Initiative. Some of Sikorski’s main thoughts were recently brought forth in a National Review article “East is Best: America’s Friends in Europe, and What They Understand.”

President Adamkus with conference participants on March 8 at the Washington Marriott Hotel.
He states important reasons why Central and East Europeans support America. These are: 1) Accumulated American goodwill over the years thanks to its moral stance against the Soviet Union, 2) East European sensitivity to overbearing treatment, 3) West European hypocrisy regarding unilateralism, and 4) disregard in Western Europe over the importance over the liberation of the East from Soviet Union.

The third panel, moderated by Mati Kõiva, dealt with the topic of “Defense Preparedness and Anti-Terrorism”. Panelists were Latvian Defense Minister Girts Valdis Kristovskis, Lithuanian Seimas NATO Committee Chairman Vaclav Stankevic, and Estonian Foreign Ministry Deputy Under-Secretary Harri Tiido, recently named Estonia’s Ambassador to NATO.

The fourth panel, a “View from the Baltics - the Expatriate Experience”, moderated by Henry Gaidis, provided interesting and diverse views from former Latvian Ambassador to Washington, Ojars Kalnins, Estonian parliamentarian Mari-Ann also pictured are moderator Henry Gaidis, Mari-Ann Kelam and Linas Kojelis.

Kay King, of the House International Relations Committee, accepts JBANC’s Baltic Democracy Award on behalf of Congressman Tom Lantos.

Amb. Ojars Kalnins during panel discussion on the “Expatriate Experience”. Also pictured are moderator Henry Gaidis, Mari-Ann Kelam and Linas Kojelis.
Kelam, and U.S.-Baltic Foundation co-founder Linas Kojelis. All three have roots in the Baltics, were largely raised in the United States, but did not hesitate to return to their respective ancestral homes following the restoration of independence. Kalnins had worked as an advisor and consultant to a nascent Latvian political movement, before becoming Ambassador. Currently, he lives in Riga and is Chairman of the Latvian Trans-Atlantic Organization (LATO). Mari-Ann Kelam’s experience led her to eventually become a member of the Pro Patria Union of Estonia, where she served in the Estonian Riigikogu. Both Kalnins and Kelam served in earlier times as Members of the JBANC Board of Directors. Linas Kojelis support to Lithuania was through the business world. After a distinguished career in American politics, serving in the Reagan White House, he returned to Lithuania as the President of Kojelis and Company, to assist the nation in its return to free markets.

All three of these individuals have contributed immensely to the development of their respective homelands and to their return to the nations of the free world. The perspective provided by Kelam was especially poignant. She recounted that while living in the United States she had spent her entire life trying to explain to Americans what Estonia and Estonian were all about. Since her return to Estonia, she now spends most of her time explaining to Estonians what America and Americans are all about. Kojelis provided information concerning the old Soviet graft mentality that still existed in some quarters of the Baltic. All noted the great advancements made by Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuanian since the restoration of independence.

The last panel featured three professional staff members of the United States Senate - Jessica Fugate of Sen. Richard Lugar's (R-IN) Foreign Relations committee staff, Paul Unger of Sen. George Allen's (R-VA) staff and Eric Pierce of Sen. Ben Nelson's (D-NE) staff, with JBANC Board Member John Bolsteins as the moderator. The first two staff members have experience in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, on which their respective Senators serve, and the third in the Armed Services Committee, on which Sen. Nelson sits. Both committees are key in the NATO expansion process.

Appropriately, the three panelists brought the theme of the conference to a close by giving their assessment of how the Baltic countries would be treated in the not too distant day when the Senate casts America's vote on Baltic membership in NATO. They were of the opinion that this could take place as early as May. The three were uniformly certain that the Senate debate and vote on the Baltics would be highly favorable. Some issues that may arise to which the Baltics need pay special attention would be corruption, military readiness and minority issues. The three were clear, however, that there was no issue that would bar Baltic aspirations to NATO membership.

The panel discussions were later summarized by JBANC Board member Dr. Lya Karm.

In addition to the moving dinner address by President Valdas Adamkus, another highlight was the luncheon speech by Walter Andrusyszyn, Director of Central and Northern Europe at the National Security Council.

All speakers during the conference confirmed the importance of the Baltic countries in NATO and emphasized the certainty of NATO’s future despite whatever dissent may occur. All thanked the work of Baltic Americans, and JBANC, in particular, for helping bring Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania closer to NATO membership.

JBANC would like to again thank 2003 conference sponsors: the World Federation of Free Latvians, the U.S.-Baltic Foundation, the Estonian World Council, the Lithuanian Research and Studies Fund and Lithuanian Catholic Centre “Zidinys” in Nottingham, England. In addition, we thank Senator Richard Durbin for sponsoring the Russell Senate Caucus Room, the Estonian-American Chamber of Commerce and Industry for assisting with the Economics seminar, the Lithuanian Chamber of Commerce of America and also Türi Vodka for providing complimentary cocktails. Professor John Calabrese of American University opened the doors for his students to come to our aide. Rojs Dauburs kept JBANC’s website ticking. Ed Berzins has been a kind inspiration.

Contributed by JBANC staff, Janis Bolsteins, Henry Gaidis and Vello Ederma
April 17, 2003

The Honorable Judd Gregg
Chairman,
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, State and the Judiciary
United States Senate
Washington, DC  20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

On behalf of the Joint Baltic American National Committee, Inc. (JBANC), representing a million Americans of Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian heritage, I ask you to support the restoration of funding to the three Baltic language services of Voice of America and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. Without the support of Congress, all United States broadcasts to the Baltic countries will otherwise abruptly cease; American prestige in the region may suffer. The elimination of the six services is premature.

We are very encouraged by the endorsement in the Authorization bill by Senators Lugar and Biden and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to restore $8.9 million to these broadcasts. To fully restore the funding for the services to Central and Eastern Europe, an additional $2-3 million in transmission costs would be needed to augment the figures in the authorization language. We hope that you agree with us in this assessment as the Commerce, Justice and State Appropriations bill is being considered.

International broadcasting has been an important tool in promoting U.S. interests abroad. We stand against the elimination of these radio services, at least until the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, including the three Baltic countries, are securely in NATO and the European Union. It is vital, especially today, that America’s voice be heard and heard clearly.

Thank you again for your support and we look forward to working with you on this important matter.

Sincerely,

John Bolsteins
Chairman

Cc: Members of the Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, State and the Judiciary

www.jbanc.org
United States as eligible for NATO enlargement assistance, including Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, receive support through Foreign Military Financing (FMF) and International Military Education and Training (IMET) programs. Funding levels to the Baltics have remained steady over the past few years. Altau emphasized in his testimony that these programs “have enabled countries in the region to strengthen their role as U.S. allies and to increase their contribution to the stability and security of the Trans-Atlantic community.” Fiscal Year 2004 FMF levels requested for the three Baltics total $19.5 million. IMET figures in the FY04 Administration request total $3.6 million for all three Baltic countries, up from $3.3 million last year.

Radical declines in U.S. assistance levels are proposed under the Freedom Support Act, affecting Ukraine, Georgia and Armenia, and Support for Eastern European Democracy (SEED) programs. This year’s budget proposal sees the elimination of funding for regional SEED programs in the Baltics. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania graduated from SEED on a country-by-country basis prior to 2000.

Altau further stated that “U.S. assistance programs make a difference in a region that suffered many decades of communist misrule, political repression, and the negative effects of highly centralized command economics.” A delay in the impending elimination of Voice of America and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty services to the Baltics and the region was requested in the testimony. Altau stated that “it is vital, especially today, that America’s voice be heard and heard clearly. The great support for the U.S. in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe has recently been affirmed.” The “untimely exit” of the radio broadcasts, said Altau, would leave “a void, in which the image of the United States abroad could be undermined.”

Following the hearings, the Committee will soon meet to begin to act on legislation. The 2004 fiscal year begins October 1.

Changes in Members of the Board of Directors

(jana Barona Latvian School. He has a Bachelor’s Degree in Economics from the University of Illinois in Champaign and a J.D. from DePaul University, where he was an editor of the Law Review. He currently practices law in Washington D.C. and resides in Arlington, Virginia with his wife Laura and children Aleksandrs and Grants.

Mr. Bolsteins has expressed a strong belief that the two new members of JBANC Board will bring new energy, creativity and dedication to enhance the already successful work of the organization. Dr. Kondratas replaces the late Algis Rimas and Blumbergs replaces Sandra Aistars.

Staff News: Simonas Girdzijauskas has recently been promoted to the position of JBANC Program Director. Girdzijauskas, a graduate of George Mason University, received his degree in International Affairs and Legal Studies in 2002.

JBANC has been ably assisted over the past three months by Samuel Tholen, a student of American University’s Washington Semester program in Foreign Policy. Tholen hails from Karlstad, Sweden.

JOINT BALTIC
AMERICAN NATIONAL COMMITTEE, INC.

www.jbanc.org
Califonia Congressman Dana Rohrabacher
Meets with JBANC

Washington, DC (JBANC) - Members of the Joint Baltic American National Committee, Inc. (JBANC) met on March 11 with California Republican Dana Rohrabacher to discuss matters of mutual concern, including U.S. foreign policy, the Baltic countries, NATO and the war on terrorism.

Congressman Rohrabacher, representing California's 46th congressional district, is a senior member of the International Relations Committee and is currently Chairman of the House Science Committee's Space and Aeronautics Subcommittee. He is a member of the House Baltic Caucus.

U.S. Capitol Lunch on Rebuilding Jewish Vilnius
Sponsored by USBF

(Continued from page 9)

community and Baltic Americans as we seek to both examine events of the past, and work together on joint programs and projects in the future. I believe the currently rising generation of leaders in both communities will be able to establish a true and mutually beneficial dialogue,” said Mr. Zingeris, noting that communication between the two communities has been limited since the tragic events of World War II which saw the execution of almost all of Lithuania’s Jews and elimination of evidence of its culture in urban environments. A former chairman of the Lithuanian parliament’s foreign affairs committee, Mr. Zingeris also remarked on his country’s efforts to join NATO.

"Preserving the memories of the Jewish experience in Lithuania is vitally important, and the U.S.-Baltic Foundation salutes Emanuelis for working tirelessly to build a future for Jewish Lithuania that includes Americans. I urge all Americans to visit the Tolerance Center in Lithuania, and to become a part of rebuilding Jewish Vilnius," stated William Altman, USBF’s Chairman.

A national non-profit membership organization, the U.S.-Baltic Foundation, established in 1990, develops and implements programs and projects to strengthen democracy in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, and to increase mutual understanding between the U.S. and the Baltic States. Based in Washington, D.C., its programs include development and support of key national institutions in the Baltics, including municipal government, independent media, public administration and NGO’s. For more information visit www.usbaltic.org or call 202-393-3338.

Preserving the memories of the Jewish experience in Lithuania is vitally important.
Latvians Will Lead JBANC into 2004

(JBANC) - On March 7, 2003, the Board of Directors of JBANC met in Washington, DC to discuss strategy for the coming year.

At the meeting, the annual rotation of JBANC’s leadership also took place. For the 2003-2004 term, the American Latvian Association, Inc. assumes the role. ALA President Dace Copeland becomes President of JBANC for the coming year. Likewise, Janis Bolsteins of Damascus, Maryland becomes Chairman.

Meetings of the full Board of Directors are held twice a year. The board is comprised of the Presidents of the three constituent organizations of JBANC, along with two Washington D.C. representatives from each organization.

The local Washington area Board, with two members from each of the three organizations, meets monthly under the direction of the Chairman.

JBANC is dedicated to providing and advocating objective and reliable information about international relations, diplomatic trends and policies on foreign affairs as they affect the Baltic countries.