NATO Treaty Ratified Unanimously by U.S. Senate

Washington DC (JBANC) - The Protocols to the North Atlantic Treaty of 1949 on the Accession of Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia were ratified on May 8 in the U.S. Senate by a vote of 96-0. With this, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and four other countries from Central and Eastern Europe have... (Continued on page 5)

President George W. Bush and Secretary of State Colin Powell congratulate Foreign Ministers of the seven NATO aspirant nations at the White House after the U.S. vote on May 8. 

White House photo by Tina Hager

(Continued on page 5)

Celebrating the U.S. Senate’s ratification of NATO enlargement, about 200 Washington, DC area Balts gathered at the Latvian Community Center in Rockville, Maryland on May 16. The gathering was sponsored by JBANC and the World Federation of Free Latvians as a tribute to those who lent a hand over the years to the Baltic cause.

(Continued on page 10)

Vello Ederma, Gunnar Paabo and Mati Kõiva enjoy the May 16 celebration.

JBANC NATO Celebration
In late May, a legislator from the Russian Duma submitted a complaint to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly dealing with the alleged plight of Russians in Latvia and Estonia. The complaint was received by the Assembly’s Committee on the Civil Dimension of Security, which will reportedly send a delegation to the Baltic States to investigate and report on the conditions of Russians there. The report is then to be taken up at the next meeting of the Assembly, to be held in Florida in November. The Assembly is an advisory group of parliamentarians from the NATO members.

While numerous Western groups and organizations, governmental and non-governmental have studied this Russian "minority" issue over the last 10 years, and found little culpability on the part of the Baltics, the latter remain under the gun from Moscow. It’s ever more transparent that, at its very core, Russia--not to mention many Russians in the Baltics--want nothing less than the return to dominance by Russians in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

Whatever findings the NATO delegation makes, it should start the report with some essential truths about the vast numbers of Russians in Estonia and Latvia particularly. It could explore, for starters, the premise above, that Russia wants nothing less than dominance over the three Baltic States.

It should by all means state the historical events that caused the mass influx of Russians, from the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, to forced annexation and artificial industrialization. It should analyze the Russian language press in the Baltics and the role it plays in egging on Russian-Baltic animosity. It should compare and contrast the immigration and naturalization policies of other Western countries compared to those of the Baltics.

Above all, the report should not treat the "minority" issue as a stand-alone phenomenon, as if the Russians, as some kind of innocents abroad, suddenly appeared in the Baltics out of nowhere…

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Russification, the mass murders, the deportations. But someone damn well is! And there is only one thing that will set it right, or at least move in that direction.

It would be the finest sort of thing if the NATO report would make as its first and chief recommendation that Russia issue an apology for what its recently deposed kin, Soviet Russia, did to the Baltics during those 50 years of occupation. That is the one and only key to begin setting things right between the Balts and Russians. There is no single other gesture that would have the meaning and impact an apology would.

What’s the problem Russia? Why don't you do it? You know it’s the right thing to do. There is even a precedent to help you. Mikhail Gorbachev, during his bold tenure, issued apologies of sorts for the infamous Russian killings of Poles in the Katyn forest during World War II and for the 1968 Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia.

Mr. Putin should be no less bold.

***
The Road to NATO Membership for the Baltics

A Historical Perspective

NATO membership for the Baltic countries has been long awaited. The goals of having Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania free, unoccupied by foreign powers, stable and secure are nearly all achieved. It is the work of generations. Washington also counts on the support of the Baltic countries and Central and Eastern Europe. These countries have proven to be good friends of the United States at a time when Washington still needs true friends and allies.

Washington has long supported the Baltic countries. For half a century, the policy of non-recognition of the Soviet annexation remained the cornerstone for the hopes of Balts to regain their independence.

With independence restored in 1991, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania were quick in joining Western institutions. The Baltics already in 1991 became members of the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (from 1997 as the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council). The Russian military only left Lithuania in 1993 and Estonia and Latvia in 1994. While there were NATO enlargement skeptics from the beginning, at the RAND Institute researchers like Ron Asmus, Steven Larabee and others understood early on that NATO’s enlargement to the East was not only possible, but necessary.

In 1994 the Baltic countries joined NATO’s Partnership for Peace (PfP) program. Within PfP were born partnership programs between Estonia and Maryland, Latvia and Michigan and Lithuania and Pennsylvania and those states’ National Guards. Congress supported U.S. military funding through Foreign Military Financing and International Military and Education Training programs.

By the 1996 presidential campaign, emphasis on the next round of enlargement was growing, focusing mainly on Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic. The Administration’s position on potential Baltic membership had not crystallized yet, although most felt that it could happen sometime in the future. America’s Russia policy usually took precedence.

During the 1997 NATO Summit in Madrid, Baltic prospects were raised. Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic received invitations to join the Alliance. In the Final Communiqué, the efforts and advances of the Baltic countries and others towards NATO enlargement were recognized. Despite remaining out of that round of enlargement, the “Open Door” policy meant the Baltic countries would have to do their best to get in.

From this process grew the Baltic Action Plan, which metamorphosed in January 1998 as the U.S.-Baltic Partnership Charter. With this were set the principles that were to “guide the deepening of mutual cooperation and advance common objectives, including Baltic integration into the European and transatlantic communities.” These goals now had an official forum at the highest governmental levels.

In April 1998, the United States Senate voted 80-19 to ratify the NATO Treaty and in the spring of 1999, Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic became NATO’s newest members. At NATO’s 50th anniversary Summit in Washington, DC that spring, NATO’s doors remained wide open for a number of candidate countries, including the Baltics. Steps for their integrating into the Alliance were defined through Membership Action Plans, outlining a series of reforms in military, civilian and governmental spheres for each of these countries. It was also determined that the next NATO Summit would occur in 2002.

In May 2000, the so-called “Vilnius” process began, with nine aspirant countries joining for the first time in the Lithuanian capital. A new high-level of cooperation and exchange began between these countries. A year later, in Bratislava, Czech President Vaclav Havel gave a strong testament of support for not only the Vilnius group but to the NATO membership.

(Continued on page 6)
Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are learning yet again what it means to be the little siblings in the international family of Western democracies, finding themselves between a rock and a hard place on the issue of the International Criminal Court (ICC).

After regaining their independence, the Baltic governments have worked relentlessly to reach the standards of their Western counterparts, following, adapting and implementing provisions of NATO’s Membership Action Plan and the European Union’s accession protocols. Both processes are being successfully completed, as membership in these Trans-Atlantic organizations should be granted in early 2004.

This fine balancing of their domestic, national, regional and international interests may have to pass yet another diplomatic hurdle of zero sum politics. As the Baltic countries may fall victims to a recent rift between the United States and some members of the European community.

Because of their opposition to ICC, the U.S. has requested that countries sign on to Article 98, under which signatories endorse a bilateral agreement not to extradite service personnel to ICC for prosecution. To increase the pressure on undecided countries, the U.S. government has adopted the American Servicemembers’ Protection Act of 2002 (PL 107-206), under which countries not signatories to the Article 98 provision by June 30, 2003 will lose millions of dollars in U.S. military assistance. However, the bill does not apply to NATO members such as France, German or Belgium, and selected strategic allies such as Australia.

The Baltic countries have served as de facto NATO allies for nearly a decade, with their troops assisting and serving in Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan and now Iraq. This occurred even as they took fire from some European countries for failing to take the opportunity to be quiet, as French President Jacques Chirac put it. Under U.S. law, Latvia alone, for example, stands to lose more than $8 million in Foreign Military Financing (FMF) and International Military Education and Training (IMET) funding in 2003 as it does not qualify for exemption from the bill. The matter now threatens to cause a practical lock-down in the military partnership between the U.S. and the Baltics.

In order to prevent Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania from being unjustifiably punished, Rep. John Shimkus (R-IL), co-chairman of the House Baltic Caucus, introduced a bill which would amend PL 107-206 to include any “country that has concluded a protocol with NATO for the accession of the country to NATO.” This would then exclude the three Baltic countries plus Slovakia, Slovenia and Bulgaria from such impurity. Romania, alone among the NATO in-

(Continued on page 13)
NATO Treaty Ratified Unanimously by U.S. Senate

July  2003

received conclusive support from the United States to join the Alliance.

Discussion on the Senate floor on the Treaty lasted almost four hours. Senator Richard Lugar (R-IN), chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, along with Senator Joe Biden (D-DE), the committee’s lead Democrat, managed the debate. There was strong support for the Baltics given by all those who spoke, perhaps most notably by Senator Richard Durbin (D-IL). While mentioning his Lithuanian roots, Sen. Durbin emphasized the importance of remembering just how long the Baltics have suffered to get to where they are today as countries that are actively participating in many peacekeeping operations and acting as de-facto members of the Alliance.

Other strong messages of endorsement were given by Senators George Voinovich (R-IN) and George Allen (R-VA).

One amendment to the Treaty, a Sense of Congress measure that asks for future consideration of NATO’s consensus rule and possible membership suspension mechanisms, was approved during the debate. These issues would be addressed at the North Atlantic Council, NATO’s parliamentary body in 18 months - half a year after NATO’s newest members have joined. The amendment was introduced by Senators John Warner (R-VA), Carl Levin (D-MI), Pat Roberts (R-KS) and Jeff Sessions (R-AL). This particular point was also debated by Senators Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-TX) and John McCain (R-AZ).

The vote was later welcomed by President George W. Bush in a White House ceremony featuring the prime ministers of the seven candidate countries. President Bush was likewise credited for his vision and leadership during this round of NATO Enlargement.

The Joint Baltic American National Committee, Inc. (JBANC), representing a million Americans of Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian heritage, has actively supported efforts to see the three Baltic countries become members of NATO, a move that serves U.S. interests by enhancing Trans-Atlantic security and cooperation.

“...[Sen. Durbin remembered] just how long the Baltics have suffered to get to where they are today...”

Juris Mezinskis, Janis Kukainis, Dace Copeland, Ilze Kalnina and Karl Altau meet with Sue Hardesty (third from right) on May 30 to convey thanks to Senator Richard Durbin for his vote to support NATO enlargement ratification.
The Road to NATO Membership for the Baltics
A Historical Perspective

Aspirations of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

A watershed moment in the United States occurred in January 2001, when then Sen. Jesse Helms (R-NC) gave his unabashed consent and support for Baltic membership in NATO. This was an important step forward, as Helms was a very influential member of Congress, the chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee. Although the topic of NATO enlargement was mostly ignored during the 2000 presidential campaign, new President George W. Bush began to focus and act more on the process. The Administration’s plans came to light in June 2001 when President Bush traveled to Poland. In Warsaw, he stated that “Europe’s new democracies, from the Baltic to the Black Sea and all that lie between, should have the same chance for security and freedom -- and the same chance to join the institutions of Europe…” This meant of course under NATO’s security umbrella. The Administration did not publicly specify countries that they may have favored, but it was clear that the U.S. was definitely behind NATO’s enlargement. The chances for one or more of the Baltic countries getting in was now very possible.

By the late ‘90’s, different ideas of how NATO should be enlarged were developing. Some said there should be a “Big Bang” to invite as many countries as possible. There was also the “regatta” - a more selective variation of the Big Bang. There was a Northern dimension and a Southern dimension. Former National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski favored the trio of Slovakia, Slovenia and one Baltic country - Lithuania, neighboring new NATO member Poland.

When first postulating this, Brzezinski believed that having one Baltic country join would not be as hard for Russia to accept. When Sen. Helms spoke at the beginning of 2001 about the whole trio of Baltics, the idea of a single Baltic country going it alone faded away. The U.S. Administration was more careful, but in Congress, there was growing support for a larger round of enlargement.

There were solid supporters of the Baltic component, like Sen. Helms. Congressman John Shimkus, co-chair of the House Baltic Caucus, who along with Sen. Durbin are of Lithuanian heritage and two of the biggest friends of the Baltics, introduced in April 2001 a Baltic NATO resolution (HCR116), which received much support in the House. Although non-binding, the resolution stated distinctly that the Baltic countries should become members in 2002.

Later that summer, the (Gerald Solomon) Freedom Consolidation Act was introduced. This legislation authorized continued military funding for seven of the aspirant countries but was more importantly seen as giving tacit support for those countries to join the Alliance. The Act was seen as a true litmus test of how the vote on the next round would transpire.

With the terrorist attacks of September 11, a new international order was born out of the ashes. It was now imperative to join in the fight against terror - this was now priority number one.

Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania had already supported NATO in Bosnia and Kosovo for years through PfP, and now supported the United State’s efforts to weed out terror groups in Afghanistan. Ties between the Baltics, the United States and other NATO and coalition members grew from this experience. Baltic leaders effectively conveyed their commitment to fight tyranny.

From the tragedy of September 11 arose a new determination by the Congress to support NATO enlargement-related legislation. In November, the House passed the Freedom Consolidation Act by a large majority. The real test was in the Senate, since it would have to later vote on ratification. The vote in the Spring was again overwhelming, 85-6. The voice of those in opposition in the Senate, who threatened to freeze the next round of enlargement in 1998, was now beginning to
Losing Momentum is Not an Option

While celebrating the successful campaign to bring Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania into the NATO family, we must not forget one of the major contributors to those efforts. And no, I am not talking about the relentless and sometimes even sacrificial efforts by Baltic American organizations and their passionate constituencies, nor the outstanding job done by the respective Baltic embassies, their excellent staff and foreign dignitaries or strong political lobbyists and a supportive Administration. The stabilizing force behind all those efforts has been the quiet but very important work by the dedicated friends of the Baltics in the U.S. Congress - members of the Senate and House Baltic Caucuses. Under the leadership of Sen. Richard Durbin (D – IL) and Sen. Gordon Smith (R – OR) in the Senate and by Rep. John Shimkus (R- IL) and Rep. Dennis Kucinich (D – OH) in the House, the caucus’ leaders and their dedicated staffs have created a backbone that kept the issue of the Baltics on Washington’s political agenda. Staffers like Sue Hardesty (with Sen. Durbin), Courtney Anderson (with Rep. John Shimkus), along with Michael Haltzel of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and Vince Morelli of the House International Relations Committee, have inspired many with their hard work and dedication to the Baltics.

Two factors could have undermined this hard work and success. One, the House Baltic Caucus lost ten of its 75 members as a result of the 2002 Congressional elections. Fortunately, recruitment of new members is back in full swing. Also, following the invitations to the Baltics to join NATO and the successful Senate ratification vote, the real threat of a void in the political agendas of Baltic American groups could have emerged. There are strong signs, fortunately, for both caucuses and constituencies that that there will remain strong advocacy of the pro-Baltic agenda. These are already seen in the initiation of supportive legislative action and encouraging signs of continued cultural, political, and economy –

(Continued on page 15)
Senate Baltic Freedom Caucus

Co-Chairs

Sen. Richard Durbin (D-IL)
Sen. Gordon Smith (R-OR)

Caucus Members

Sen. Joseph Lieberman (D-CT)
Sen. Charles Grassley (R-IA)
Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-CA)

Sen. Peter Fitzgerald (R-IL)
Sen. George Voinovich (R-OH)
Sen. George Allen (R-VA)

Sen. Debbie Stabenow (D-MI)
Sen. Barbara Mikulski (D-MD)
Sen. Ben Nelson (D-NE)

Sen. Barbara Boxer (D-CA)
Sen. Robert Bennett (R-UT)

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## House Baltic Caucus

### Co-chairs:
- **Rep. John SHIMKUS (R-IL)**
- **Rep. Dennis KUCINICH (D-OH)**

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In a room adorned with vintage anti-Soviet posters, pro-Baltic yard signs, and other political memorabilia from the past, the assembled toasted the major victory that was achieved on Capitol Hill the previous week. The Senate’s 96-0 vote on May 8, 2003 validated the efforts of JBANC’s supporters, enabling them to raise a glass to celebrate their efforts and to thank the Senate.

The evening was highlighted by speeches by representatives of the Baltic embassies in Washington - Janis Eichmanis from Latvia, Kristjan Prikk from Estonia, and Renatas Norkus from Lithuania. In addition to the governmental representatives, many Baltic-Americans also participated in the official program, including Gunars Meierovics, one of JBANC’s founding members, Mati Köiva and Vello Ederma of the Estonian American National Council, former JBANC Board member John Genys, Audrone Pakstys of the Lithuanian American Council and Linas Kojelis of the U.S.-Baltic Foundation. Mr. Kojelis’ remarks were noteworthy because of the challenge he made to the JBANC Board to find a new mission now that the NATO enlargement goal has been achieved. Rounding out the list of speakers was Maj. George Spence of the Maryland National Guard, who spoke of the excellent relationship the U.S. military has enjoyed with its Baltic allies.

The evening was organized by JBANC Managing Director Karl Altau and Program Assistant Simonas Girdzijauskas. Emceeing the event was JBANC Chairman Janis Bolsteins.

Peteris Blumbergs
ALA/JBANC
fade. For one, their fears about Russia were dissipating. Even Russia kept a lower profile on enlargement to the Baltics.

President Bush signed the Freedom Consolidation Act into law in mid-June 2002.

After this followed voting in early October 2002 on the Shimkus resolution and also the “Transatlantic Security and NATO Enhancement Resolution of 2002”, sponsored by Rep. Elton Gallegly (R-CA). This bill gave support for the principle of NATO enlargement. Both passed, the Shimkus resolution by voice vote and the Gallegly resolution 358-9. It was a complete triumph.

Participating in the July, 2002 Riga Summit of NATO aspirant countries, were delegations from all Vilnius group countries and also from all of the NATO countries, including a five-member U.S. Senate delegation. Sen. Trent Lott, at the time Republican Majority Leader, led the codel. Lott made known his wish that all Baltic countries receive invitations to join NATO during the November Prague Summit. With this, and the successful legislation, there was every reason to believe that all three Baltics would receive invitations in Prague.

Although there were slight moments of hesitation in the weeks leading up to Prague, the pieces were now in place.

So, at the Prague NATO Summit in November 2002 invitations were issued to Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Romania and Bulgaria to begin membership negotiations with the Alliance. President Bush visited Lithuania and Romania immediately following the Summit to project the goodwill of the United States and his best wishes.

In Vilnius, President Bush told an appreciative crowd that the Baltic countries “will never again stand alone”. Thousands of Lithuanians welcomed the statement with cheers of “Aciu Aciu!” (Thank you!).

NATO membership accession negotiations lasted this year until March. NATO member nations signed the Protocols of Accession to the North Atlantic Alliance on March 26 in Brussels.

Senate Foreign Relations and Armed Services committee then held hearings on NATO enlargement. There was considerable focus on NATO in Washington at the time, mostly having to do with disputes arising over Iraq and membership issues.

By late March began the first ratification votes by NATO member countries. With support in all corners and the behest of the Administration, scheduling of the NATO debate and vote came quicker than most had anticipated. Along with the leadership and support of new Majority Leader Bill Frist (R-TN) and Foreign Relations Committee chairman Richard Lugar (R-IN), the picture was clear. The U.S. would wholly support all seven nations - they were all firm supporters of the United States and solid partners in Europe. Central and Eastern Europe, particularly Poland, stood out now as a new bastion in the eyes of Washington.

The Senate debate began on May 6 and lasted four hours. The debate in 1998, by comparison, went over a week. The strongest statements of support came from Senators Lugar, Biden, Durbin, Voinovich, Allen and Smith.

On May 8, the United States Senate successfully completed its task by voting 96-0 in favor of enlargement.

The seven countries, including the Baltics, invited to join NATO must now continue with reforms they have started and they must go forth in the same spirit and dedication. In the Trans-Atlantic relationship, communication and collective security are still the linchpins of the Alliance. A new structure is being devised, in which NATO forces can respond more quickly and more effectively. The Baltic countries can each offer smaller and more mobile forces to NATO, and specialized niche capabilities. The Baltics are showing that they take their responsibilities very seriously. Baltic cooperation has also been lauded as a model for other regions.

(Continued on page 14)
JBANC PRESS RELEASE: For Immediate Release
June 25, 2003
contact: Karl Altau
tel. 301-340-1954

JBANC Meets with New Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation President Jay Katzen

Washington DC (JBANC) – Members of JBANC’s Board of Directors met on June 17 with Jay Katzen, the new President and CEO of the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation, to discuss the status of the Foundation and common goals and interests.

Katzen, a former foreign service officer, and later active in Virginia politics, recently replaced Lee Edwards as the Foundation’s primary fund-raiser.

Katzen explained that the Foundation remains even more committed in reaching its goals of establishing a memorial in Washington, DC to honor the approximately 100 million victims of communist regimes around the world. Other plans are to finance a “virtual museum” which will be available online and to establish a local university connection, to allow researchers to work more closely with the Foundation. Katzen said he is optimistic that the Foundation will be able to obtain seed money from the U.S. Congress to aid in the project. The private sector will have to provide matching funds.

The Foundation plans to continue holding annual Captive Nations Week events and awards banquets honoring Freedom Fighters. Prior Truman-Reagan Freedom Award recipients have included Lane Kirkland, Vytautas Landsbergis, Elena Bonner, Vladimir Bukovsky, Sen. Jesse Helms, Sen. Joseph Lieberman and Viktor Orban. The Foundation will be working closely with embassies in Washington, DC and American-based organizations to reach its objectives.

JBANC expressed support for the projects and said it would make its publics aware of the undertaking.

For more information, please contact the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation at:
1513 Sixteenth Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036
Phone: (202) 387-7015; Fax: (202) 387-7017; E-mail: vocmemorial@aol.com

The Joint Baltic American National Committee, Inc. represents the Estonian American National Council, Inc., the American Latvian Association, Inc. and the Lithuanian American Council, Inc.

www.jbanc.org
Status of Baltic Language Broadcasting Up in the Air

As Congress Moves into the July 4th recess, the future of Baltic-language broadcasting by Voice of America (VOA) and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) remains uncertain.

Although authorization bills (S.925, H.R. 1950) incorporate language that would restore funding to the services for possibly up to two years, it is not yet clear if the language will be used in the Appropriations bill. The week-long July 4 recess begins June 30. The authorization bills are expected to be voted on following the recess.

For appropriations bills, mark-ups are also expected in July. JBANC sent a letter on April 17 to members of both Senate and House Commerce, Justice, State subcommittee members, including Senate chairman Judd Gregg (R-NH) and House chairman Rep. Frank Wolf (R-VA). The letter, signed by JBANC chairman John Bolsteins, asked for support of the restoration of funding to the Baltic language services, stating that “elimination of the…services is premature.”

It was also made known that despite the intentions of Senators Lugar and Biden and Congressmen Hyde and Lantos to preserve the broadcasts, the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG), which oversees international broadcasting, is intent on eliminating VOA positions by the end of the summer.

With cuts and the elimination of these broadcasts to the Central and East European region, the United States is taking a risk of losing leverage for its public image there. American public diplomacy has been on the defensive and it is too early to let go of its presence in that region.

It is vital that America’s voice be heard.

JBANC will stay in touch with the Committees responsible for this legislation and will continue to monitor and actively support the continua-

ICC Challenges Baltic Diplomacy

(Continued from page 4) vites, has already signed a bilateral Article 98 agreement with the U.S., one of 44 to do so. The Shimkus bill, HR 2550, was introduced on June 19, with co-sponsors Rep. Duncan Hunter (R-CA), Rep. Ike Skelton (D-MO), and Rep. Jim Oberstar (D-MN). Sen. Gordon Smith (R-OR), co-chair of the Senate Baltic Freedom Caucus, introduced a parallel Senate bill, S. 1317, supported by Senators Durbin (D-IL) and Biden (D-DE).

The lawmakers’ actions are encouraging, but the bill will not both chambers before the June 30th deadline. However, the Baltic countries may still avoid cuts in military funding if President Bush, in the national interest, chooses to use his power to grant a presidential waiver to ensure that Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are not unwarrantedly punished.

The Baltic countries stood strongly and selflessly in support of the U.S. campaign to liberate the Iraqi people, a policy that in many European countries was extremely unpopular. The political courage of the Baltics should not be forgotten.

Simonas Girdziuskauskas
JBANC
The Road to NATO Membership for the Baltics
A Historical Perspective

(Continued from page 11)

OF NATO’s 19 member countries, six countries, including the U.S. have to date ratified the Protocols to the North Atlantic Treaty. Twelve countries must still vote. The summer recess will slow down the process, but it is expected that by the Spring of 2004, all countries will have overwhelmingly endorsed enlargement. At that point, the parliaments of the seven nations joining the Alliance will have to ratify the Washington Treaty.

After the new members have ratified, they present the certified Treaty to the State Department, since according to the Treaty, the United States Department of State is the Treaty’s depository. From this moment on the applicant country becomes a full member of NATO. By the time of the next NATO Summit, expected to occur in May 2004, the seven countries will be members of the Alliance.

The flags of the new countries will then be raised in Brussels at NATO headquarters and a new era of Trans-Atlantic security will have begun.

Karl Altau
JBANC

Wisconsin State Senate Supports Baltic NATO Resolution
Measure Passes on May 6, 2003

2003 - 2004 WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE *** 2003 SENATE RESOLUTION 9

May 5, 2003 - Introduced by Senators ZIEN, RISSER, SCHULTZ and DARLING. Referred to Committee on Senate Organization.

Relating to: supporting the admission of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

Whereas, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are free, democratic, and independent nations with a long and proud history; and

Whereas, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania struggled long and hard to throw off the yoke of oppression imposed upon them by the former Soviet Union; and

Whereas, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is dedicated to the preservation of freedom and security for its members nations; and

Whereas, since 1994, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania have been active members of NATO’s Partnership for Peace program of cooperation between NATO and individual partner countries, and are contributing to NATO’s peace operations in the Balkans and central Asia, and are developing their defense capabilities through close coordination with NATO through the Membership Action Program; and

Whereas, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania desire to share in both the benefits and the obligations of NATO in pursuing the development, growth, and promotion of democratic institutions and ensuring free market economic development; and

Whereas, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania recognize their responsibilities as democratic nations and are exercising such responsibilities in concert with members of NATO - an example being their declaration along with full NATO members of solidarity and support for the United Staten in the common fight against terrorism; and

Whereas, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania and the United States, as well as other members of NATO and other qualified NATO candidate countries, find that their security is indivisible from the stability of central Europe and the Baltic Sea region; and

Whereas, the Council of State Governments of the United States passed a resolution in April 2002 endorsing the enlargement of NATO to include Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, and other qualified candidate nations who share the values fundamental to NATO; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the senate, That the members of the Wisconsin senate urge NATO to admit Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, and other qualified candidate nations, into NATO; and, be it further

Resolved, That the senate chief clerk shall send a copy of this resolution to NATO.

(End)
Losing Momentum is Not an Option

(Continued from page 7)

Once again I believe that the Congressional Baltic Caucuses could serve as an example of continuous work with and for the Baltics. In only a few short months, while many activists were still discussing the loss of raison d’être after NATO enlargement, the Baltic agenda has been as crowded as ever. Issues of international broadcasting to the Baltic region, the delicate situation over the International Criminal Court, and the controversial Russian report on the minority situation in Latvia and Estonia, presented to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, are only a few to mention.

Yet another example of active engagement between U.S. and the Baltics is the recent trip to the Baltic by eleven members of U.S. Congress, led by Rep. Doug Bereuter (R-NE). The Congressmen had the opportunity to learn first hand of the political solidarity and economic strength of the Baltic region. Because of the initiative by Rep. John Shimkus (R-IL) who personally invited members of the delegation to join the House Baltic Caucus, the caucus’ membership is expected to reach its pre-election strength and increase the circle of Baltic supporters and their influence inside the Beltway.

Finally, the active engagement between local Baltic American constituents and Congress is vital for the interests of the Baltics and the U.S., keeping active the continued mission of ensuring the prosperity of that region. It is natural that activists feel the need for a well-deserved rest after the push for NATO enlargement. However, it is crucial to make sure that this short vacation does not turn into a long-term retirement from the field of political advocacy for the Baltics.

A bit of Skrunda. At Sen. Carl Levin’s (D-MI) office, Janis Kukainis and Dace Copeland check a piece of the old Soviet radar station which occupied Latvia.

www.jban.org
On June 20, Vaira Vike-Freiberga was decisively re-elected as President of Latvia by the Latvian Seima by an 88-6 vote.

President Freiberga has led Latvia on a path of social and economic growth and stability. Over the years she has become a prominent voice and face for strong Baltic aspirations to become full fledged members of Trans-Atlantic community. Under her guidance, Latvia has made significant inroads by reforming its social structure with respect to human rights, economic growth and judicial reform. It has also developed into an influential regional ally.

With Freiberga as President, Latvia within the past year has been invited to join NATO and the European Union. Latvia should become a full member of both organizations in early 2004.

JBANC congratulates the President on her re-election and looks forward to continued cooperation between Latvia and the Baltic-American communities in the United States.