Death Knell Sounds for U.S. Broadcasting to Baltics

Washington, DC (JBANC) - Broadcasts of the Voice of America and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty to Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania appear to be nearing the end of the line. Since no funding for the services has been included in the Fiscal Year 2004 Omnibus bill, it appears almost certain that Baltic language services will close by the end of January 2004.

Both chambers of Congress are now gone for the Holiday recess without completing work on the Consolidated Appropriations bill (H.R. 2673) which includes the Commerce, Justice, State (CJS) appropriations bill, the legislative vehicle that funds U.S. international radio broadcasting, including VOA and RFE/RL. Con-

(Continued on page 13)

President Bush Grants Waiver on Military Assistance to Baltics

Washington, DC (JBANC) --- Nearly five months after having U.S. military funding frozen under the American Servicemembers’ Protection Act, six countries were cleared by President George W. Bush to have military assistance reinstated. The countries named in the November 21 memorandum are Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia, Bulgaria and Slovenia.

With Washington opposed to ratification of the International Criminal Court, the U.S. requested that countries sign on to Article 98 of the Rome Statute, which established the ICC. Under this article, signatories endorse a bilateral agreement not to extradite U.S. citizens to the ICC. As supporters of the ICC, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania have sided with the European Union in not signing Article 98. Congress adopted the American Servicemembers’ Protection Act of 2002 (PL 107-206), under which countries that have not signed the Article 98 provision would lose U.S. military assistance. The ASPA bill, however, does not apply to current NATO members and select strategic allies.

The prohibitions on U.S. military assistance had been in effect since July 1. Resumption of military assistance to the Baltic countries was not otherwise envisioned until they become NATO members in 2004. The President’s waiver, in effect, amends the ASPA by granting military assistance for “certain specific projects” which “are needed to support the process of integration of these countries into NATO, or to support Operation Enduring Freedom or Operation Iraqi Freedom”.

(Continued on page 14)
The planned elimination of all U.S. international broadcasts to the Baltic states and other countries of the region reflects poorly on the foreign policy vision of the Bush Administration, and of numerous Republican appropriators in Congress. Admittedly, U.S. international radios have by and large been a nickel and dime operation ever since their inception after World War II, rarely coming close to realizing their potential for lack of adequate funding. The old saying that the U.S., irrespective of whether it’s the private or public sector, spends more per year advertising soap than promoting democracy and freedom is, sadly, true enough.

And so it is today. When the Administration submitted its annual budget proposal early this year, the Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian broadcast services of both the Voice of America (VOA) and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) were allocated zero funds. The same fate awaited other East European programs, while broadcasts to other key areas, notably Ukraine and Armenia, were drastically cut back.

The rationale of course was that these countries are now stable democracies with operational free press in each. True enough, perhaps. That formulation, however, lacks context and treats these countries in isolation, with no glance around as to where dangers may lie. And dangers there are. Pointedly, there is yet very little cognizance of the direction Russia seems to be heading with the enigmatic Putin consolidating power, nationalist extremists gaining power and liberals and other adherents of democracy losing power, badly. (For an excellent summation of where Russia is heading, read Republican Senator John McCain’s November 4 Senate floor speech ‘”New Authoritarianism in Russia.” It was written before the recent and rather alarming elections in the Duma.)

The reawakening of the apparently always ill-tempered Russian bear cannot but have an effect on the policies and institutions of the Baltic and other new European democracies. Coupled with the mass exodus of these very reputable American instruments of public diplomacy, this mix can potentially lead to a very unwelcome set of circumstances. Even more so if the U.S. remains overcommitted in the Middle East.

The bottom line is that the broadcasts still have a purpose to serve and a ready audience. This was recognized by the Senate Foreign Affairs and House International Relations Committees when in their respective authorization bills they put a one and two year moratorium on the closure of any East European broadcast service of VOA and RFE/RL. In the interim, a report was to be prepared analyzing the degree of a free press in each of the affected countries.

Instead, we have the rush to judgment by the Administration in closing down all the Baltic services with one broad sweep of the hand. In total, the six services cost somewhere under $1.0 million a year, a mighty pittance for the value they return. The President would be wise in overturning that decision to close the services.

Janis Bolsteins
Russia Revisited

During the early stages of social rebirth in the three Baltic countries after their having reclaimed independence in the early 1990’s, it was well understood that the key to their long-term security would lie in having good relations and military alliances with democratic powers. America, the Cold War rival of the Soviet Union, seemed a perfect fit as a key strategic ally. The U.S., Russia’s contender, had great political interest in seeing the Baltic region get out of Russia’s sphere of influence. The position of the U.S. proved to be crucial in the Baltics’ integration into the family of Western democracies and in the elimination of their dependency on the East. These were goals set by the transitional governments of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

The task of transformation was challenging, considering that some in Russia viewed the fall of the Soviet Union as only a historical misunderstanding that needed to be corrected. However, the following ten years proved that the approach of strategic alliance building paid off. The U.S. provided the necessary protection to Baltic interests against pressure from Russia. Many Baltic-Americans will remember with great appreciation that during the discussions on the inclusion of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania into NATO, amidst strong opposition from the East, a high U.S. administration official simply said “leave Russia to us.” To politicians and activists from the Baltics, still coping with the aftermath of the nightmare of 50 years of communism, those words meant protection, stability and security. These were elements that translated into a remarkable Baltic transformation in an unprecedented short period of time.

However, after 9/11 and the subsequent war on terror, the Baltic countries followed with great concern the “better and improved” relations between the U.S. and Russia. Considering Russian President Vladimir Putin’s background as an intelligence security officer, known for his ability to gain people’s trust, the sight of President Bush calling him a soul brother during a meeting at his ranch in Crawford, Texas, was a bit alarming to the eyes of Baltic reformists, who had good reasons to question the sincerity of this new-found relationship.

In light of the improved chemistry between Washington and Moscow, this bilateral relationship has advanced even further with Russian crude oil beginning to pour into the U.S. in 2002. The lucrative possibility of tapping further into the Russian crude oil market would effectively limit America’s dependency on oil flowing from the Middle East. This could potentially make Russia a very important strategic partner for the United States. The new partnership seemed to be advancing when Putin, joined by a U.S. Senator, attended a ribbon-cutting ceremony at the opening of a Lukoil gas station in New York this September.

Although no one questioned the need to integrate Russia into the family of western democratic countries, many Baltic political analysts and activists were deeply concerned about the lack of constructive criticism from the U.S. regarding Russia’s violations of hu-

(Continued on page 12)
Much has been written about the reason why traditional allies such as France and Germany have failed to support the American-led war on terrorism and in particular its invasion and liberation of Iraq. In March 2003, the United States invited over 50 countries, including Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, to help build a “coalition of the willing” to assist in disarming Saddam Hussein. All three of the Baltic nations quickly accepted the invitation and agreed to support the American initiative in any way possible while other traditional allies have hesitated to this day. The support given by these former Soviet occupied nations even led Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld to compare the “New” Europe favorably with what he called the “old”.

Still some critics argued that the three small Baltic nations had nothing to contribute to such a massive effort and would not make a difference. Though these three states do have a limited capability to contribute, it has become evident that they can add value beyond just airspace clearance and emergency bases. All three militaries have skilled, trained and experienced soldiers who can share and put into practice experience and shared collective knowledge from past conflicts.

Peacekeeping missions have proven to be a very useful way in which the Baltic states can assist and contribute to the whole in preserving freedom around the world. Though little international media attention has been given to their contributions, all three nations have for the past decade supported international peacekeeping in such hotspots such as Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia, and Kosovo.

Baltic military units have taken an active part in the United Nations Protective Force (UNPROFOR) mission to Yugoslavia while it was on the verge of a civil war. Their unwavering support continued during the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) expansion of the mission as part of their Implementation Force (IFOR) and later Stabilization Force (SFOR).

(Continued on page 10)
Maryland Consortium Aims to Solidify Ties With Baltic Nations

By Howard S. Freedlander, Socio-Economic VP of the Maryland-Baltic Educational Consortium

The nations of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania have friends in Maryland committed to the establishment of educational (including medical), cultural, city-to-city and economic development relationships between these three republics and a state known for its connection to the Baltic region.

The Maryland-Baltic Educational Consortium (M-BEC), a successor to the Maryland-Estonian Educational Consortium with a broader range, is more than six months old in its new incarnation and may receive a State Department grant to establish better educational and cultural ties between some of Maryland’s colleges/universities as well as cities and counterparts in the Baltics. For example, when finalized, the grant will help develop a Baltic/America Institute (BAI) through a collaboration of the University of Baltimore, Garrett College and Hood College with universities in the three Baltic states. Student and faculty exchanges would occur in the very near future, and would go in both directions.

As part of this arrangement, economic development, including partner cities, is an important component of the relationship building initiated and nurtured by M-BEC in further cooperation with JBANC and the Association for the Advancement of Baltic Studies (AABS). T. Rowe Price, the well-respected mutual fund company with headquarters in Baltimore, Maryland, met some months ago with M-BEC representatives and consequently is in the process of establishing a business relationship with the Hansa Bank in Tallinn, Estonia.

Professor Morad Eghbal, president of M-BEC, who teaches law, international management, and legal ethical and historical studies at the University of Baltimore Law School, said, “Though our early success is focused on Estonia, we intend to expand our efforts to include Latvia and Lithuania. In fact, we already have established contact with universities in both of these countries. We look at the Baltics as a region with a shared history, many similarities as well as unique characteristics.”

“We view our organization as one that can bring many assets to the table to strengthen the ties between Maryland and the Baltics. We want to make sure that Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, though admitted to NATO, continue to receive attention and support from the public and private sectors, which this endeavor deserves. Their future is bright and holds promise; we want to add to that luster and participate in its growth.”

Maryland’s recent interest in the Baltic region and specifically Estonia goes back to 1993 when the Maryland National Guard, through the State Department’s Partnership for Peace program, established a relationship with this northern-most Baltic nation. Maryland chose an affiliation with Estonia due to the significant Estonian-American population in the Baltimore-Washington area. At the time, Pennsylvania had a partnership with Lithuania, while Michigan had one with Latvia. There exist already 10 partner city relationships between Maryland and the Baltics. M-BEC represents the most recent civilian-to-civilian articulation of this visionary program.

Maryland educators, led by Dr. Steve Herman, president of Garrett College in Western Maryland, Dr. David Sumler of the Maryland Higher Education Commission and Dr. Carl Stenberg, then the dean of the Yale Gordon College of Liberal Arts at the University of Baltimore, have worked carefully and deliberately to solidify ties between Maryland and Estonia. These educators are now undertaking the same intense effort with colleges and universities in Latvia and Lithuania.

Dr. Herman said, “I’m excited about seeking exchanges of students and generally viewing the Baltics as a region rich with opportuni-
People of the world should never condone or forget acts of tyranny, especially the suffering and sacrifice of innocent victims. In the 20th century we witnessed the horrors of fascism and totalitarian communism. Holocaust museums and memorials in the U.S. and abroad bear witness to the suffering and death of millions from Nazi fascism. Yet in the U.S. we have no memorial for the numerous millions who suffered and died, and in some areas of the world continue to suffer and die, from the brutality and inhumanity of totalitarian communism.

We must and can do something about it and we must act quickly. By generous and timely contributions we can help the new President and CEO of the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation, Jay Katzen, and his organization raise $225,000 by the end of December and thus receive matching funds.

The mission of the Foundation, a non-profit organization established by an Act of Congress, is to commemorate the more than 100 million victims of communism, to honor those who successfully resisted communist tyranny, to pay tribute to those who helped win the Cold War, and to educate current and future generations about communism’s past as well as continuing crimes against humanity.

With the help of the National Park Service, the Foundation has found a site in the heart of our nation’s capital (at 1st Street and Louisiana Avenue, NW, opposite the Robert Taft Carillon) and with your generous support wants to move forward with the construction of the memorial and formal dedication of the completed memorial in October 2004.

In addition to the physical monument, there will also be an online virtual museum on the Foundation’s website which will include The Roll Call of Victims – the names, photos, and personal testimonies of victims; The Hall of Heroes – honoring anti-communist champions such as Harry Truman, Ronald Reagan, Pope John Paul II, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, Andrei Sakharov, Lech Walesa, and Vaclav Havel; The Hall of Infamy – representing communism’s inhumanity to man; and Guided Tours – of other similar museums around the world. More scholarly research and programs will be done through an affiliation with a local university.

Let’s Build the Victims of Communism Memorial

Ramunas Kondratas, Ph.D.
NATO Parliamentary Assembly Discusses Russian Minority Situation at Annual Session

Washington, DC (JBANC) - Parliamentarians from 19 NATO member countries and 20 associate states met in Orlando, Florida from November 8-11 to debate the war in Iraq, terrorism, and transatlantic relations. Discussions also included reviews about military readiness for seven countries preparing to join NATO, including Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, and a lively debate about the situation of Russian-speaking minorities in those countries.

The NATO Parliamentary Assembly (NATO PA) 49th Annual Session featured speeches by, among others, General Richard Myers, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, NATO Secretary General Lord George Robertson, Marc Grossman, Under Secretary for Political Affairs at the State Department and Florida Governor Jeb Bush. Congressman Doug Bereuter (R-NE), President of the NATO PA, led the proceedings.

Karl Alttau, JBANC Managing Director, participated as an official observer.

JBANC took a greater interest in the work of the NATO PA once finding out that the Russian Federation delegation used the occasion at the May meeting in Prague to raise the minority issue in the Baltics.

At that earlier meeting, the head of the Russian State Duma delegation Ljubov Sliska brought up the issue of Russian minorities in the Baltics with an unsanctioned report from the Russian point of view. The contentious report and Russian accusations at the meeting raised considerable protest, including from U.S. delegates, together with Rep. John Shimkus, who disagreed with the manner in which the report was brought up. A compromise by the committee that dealt with the issue involved organizing a September visit to Estonia and Latvia. The report of the trip is available online at: http://www.naa.be.

JBANC, in letters to both the NATO Parliamentary Assembly and its President Doug Bereuter, took the position that the Russian delegation used the report for political reasons and overreacted on the issue while at the same time ignoring its own legacy towards the Baltic countries and responsibility for its actions there.

The Committee on the Civil Dimension of Society, which oversaw the discussion on the minority question in the Baltics, met on November 9. Professor Rainer Hofmann of the Council of Europe assessed the issue. A main qualm is that Latvia is one of the few remaining countries that has not yet signed the Council of Europe’s Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. The Convention entered into force in 1998.

(Continued on page 11)
House Baltic Caucus

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

Arizona
- Jim Kolbe

California
- Xavier Becerra
- Howard Berman
- Ken Calvert
- Christopher Cox
- David Dreier
- Elton Gallegly
- Tom Lantos
- Gary Miller
- Grace Napolitano
- Nancy Pelosi
- Dana Rohrabacher
- Lucille Roybal-Allard
- Edward Royce
- Loretta Sanchez
- Brad Sherman
- Henry Waxman

Connecticut
- John Larson

Florida
- Tom Feeney
- Porter Goss

Illinois
- John Shimkus
- Judy Biggert
- Jerry Costello
- Luis Gutierrez
- William Lipinski
- Bobby Rush
- Mary M. Miller

Michigan
- Dave Camp
- Vernor Ehlers
- Peter Hoekstra
- Dale Kildee
- Carolyn Kilpatrick
- Joe Knollenberg

Maryland
- Chris Van Hollen

Massachusetts
- James McGovern

Nebraska
- Doug Bereuter
- Lee Terry

New Jersey
- Robert Andrews
- Robert Menendez
- Frank Pallone
- Bill Pascrell
- Steve Rothman
- Chris Smith

New York
- Gary Ackerman
- Joseph Crowley
- Sue Kelly
- Peter King
- Carolyn Maloney
- Michael McNulty
- Anthony Weiner
- Louise Slaughter

Ohio
- Dennis Kucinich
- Sherrod Brown
- David Hobson
- Marcy Kaptur

Penn.
- Robert Brady
- Phil English
- Joseph Hoefel
- Tim Holden
- John Peterson
- Joseph Pitts

Texas
- Lloyd Doggett
- Martin Frost
- Jim Turner

74 Representatives Total (as of December 17, 2003)

Top Six States (57 Members):
- Party Breakdown:
  - California: 17
  - Michigan: 13
  - New York: 8
  - Pennsylvania: 7
  - Illinois/New Jersey: 6/6

JBANC welcomes to the House Baltic Caucus

***Rep. Chris Van Hollen (D-MD)***
He became the 74th Caucus Member on November 17, 2003.

www.jbanc.org
Senate Baltic Freedom Caucus

Co-Chairs

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

Caucus Members


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


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

www.jbanc.org
Baltic Militaries Prove To Be Productive Allies

(Continued from page 4)

Today, members of these forces proudly take part in continued SFOR and Kosovo Force (KFOR) operations. Through such proven service in the Balkans, these soldiers have not only acquired skills but impressed their NATO partners.

Through these Baltic units did not take part during the invasion and liberation of Iraq, they relieved American units in Bosnia, Kosovo, and Afghanistan that were needed for the operation. In the wake of the September 11 terrorist attack, Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian forces have been taking an active part as part of a Danish contingent supporting Operation Enduring Freedom. Such soldiers are still deployed near Kabul and Kandahar and risk their lives daily in the defense of freedom. From Afghanistan to Iraq, these Baltic soldiers stand proudly shoulder to shoulder with their American and British counterparts serving along side Danes, Poles, and others. The number of Balts is not large; they are proportionate to the Baltic states’ limited resources. Every soldier counts. Equally important, a Baltic contribution set an example for hesitant allies - many of whom are NATO members.

Latvian President Vaira Vike-Freiberga summarized the general feelings of the Baltic people in her November 2002, speech before the North Atlantic Council: “The Baltic people know the meaning and the value of liberty. They know that it is worth every effort to support it, to maintain it, to stand for it and to fight for it”. These words were quickly followed with action as the governments of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania approved sending troops to serve in Iraq. Though their primary mission is to ensure public order and security, they take part in combat security and search operations on a daily basis.

General Edward Pietrzyk, Commander of Polish Land Forces, underlined that in this international operation all areas of activity, including military co-operation with the local authorities and citizens, assistance in rebuilding schools, hospitals and restoring police authority play an important role for the future of Iraq. Representatives from 23 countries serve now within the multinational division in the Polish controlled sector near the capital of Baghdad.

General Richard Myers, the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman, on a recent tour of the Baltic countries told Baltic leaders that quality is what matters to NATO. Quality means a well-trained, well-equipped and competent military, and the General noted the “impressive progress” that the Baltic countries have made over the past 12 years. Commenting on the mission of Baltic soldiers in Iraq, General Myers said they are doing a great job. He also noted that rebuilding of Iraq is a team effort, and that the U.S. cannot carry it out alone. The Baltic troops serving in Afghanistan “are carrying out their mission perfectly. The coalition forces serving in Afghanistan admire their work.”

JBANC seconds that commendation and salutes all of the soldiers taking part in the continuing struggle for freedom in the world today.

Henry Gaidis
In the question and answer period that followed, two German delegates pointed to the progress made by Estonia and Latvia in integrating their Russian-speaking minorities. When the Russian delegation raised red flags with regards to the situation in Estonia and Latvia, the Latvian response to this criticism was that the Soviet occupation had created a "very difficult legacy". Guntars Krasts of Latvia stressed that about half of the Russian-speakers are Latvian citizens. He also pointed to the ongoing negative commentary by leading Russian figures with regards to the situation in Latvia. Also asking the Russian government to be more constructive in their criticism were delegates Sven Mikser of Estonia and Rasa Jukneviciene of Lithuania, who lent support for processes in their own countries.

Other interesting and relevant discussions at the NATO PA meeting centered on the subject of transatlantic relations and repairing the breaches of the previous year. There was a positive assessment of new NATO candidate preparations to join the Alliance. Reports on Invited NATO Members' Progress on Military Reforms and the Visit to Poland and Lithuania in June, 2003 are also available on the NATO PA website: http://www.naa.be

On December 8-9, members of the NATO PA participated in the third Parliamentary Transatlantic Forum in Washington, DC and will be meeting again in the spring.
Maryland Consortium Aims to Solidify Ties With Baltic Nations

(Continued from page 5)

ties for educational and cultural links that will benefit students on both sides of the Atlantic.”

Mary Ann Saar, Secretary of the Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services and long an active and well-respected member of the Estonian-American community in Maryland, serves as honorary chair of the advisory council of M-BEC and BAI. The advisory council, comprising educators and retired military officers, among others, provides another group of advocates and supporters for partnerships between Maryland and the Baltic countries.

As the State Department focuses its efforts on volatile, unstable parts of the world, M-BEC is hard at work to build and nurture a multifaceted, vibrant, robust and forward-looking relationship with the Baltic region. Professor Eghbal said, “As the democratic institutions and free market economies in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania continue to mature and prosper, M-BEC can and will play a constructive role in the future of these three countries.”

Anyone interested in learning more about M-BEC and its affiliate the Baltic/American Institute may contact its executive director, Col. (Ret.) Milt Davis, at mdeso@starpower.net or 301-930-0295.

www.garrettcollege.edu/baltic-mbec

Russia Revisited

(Continued from page 3)

human rights, free media, fair business policies, and Moscow’s reluctance to promote democratic processes in the country. No matter how important the need to encourage democratic dialogue, develop Russia’s energy sector and encourage foreign investment, turning a blind eye to Russia’s violations in order to achieve these goals just did not seem a fair trade.

Today, after the Russian Duma elections effectively annihilated liberal opposition, it seems that bilateral Russo-American relations are losing their sugar frost-
ing. It started to crack over the undeniable differences of opinion over the question of Iraq and its reconstruction. The rift further deepened after Duma elections, when the U.S. supported concerns of questionable election methods as noted by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), drawing a wave of surprise from the Kremlin. Finally, the flow of crude oil to U.S. has began to dry out and reached a mere 10 thousand barrels a day, compared to 475 thousand barrels in July. Sources say that in the near future the deliveries may be cut all together due to the Kremlin’s unwillingness to develop a separate delivery system for a single customer – the U.S.

It would be incorrect to say political analysts are rejoicing over the cooled diplomatic relations between the U.S. and Russia. However, it is hopeful, that in light of these differences, a dialog addressing them will emerge between the White House and the Kremlin. This would help a post-Soviet giant to continue its transformation into a neighbor – a friendly, free and prosperous democratic society.

Simonas Girdzijauskas
Death Knell Sounds for U.S. Broadcasting to Baltics

(Continued from page 1) Congress will reconvene on January 20 to resume its work. In the meantime, a Continuing Resolution funds the government and its agencies until January 31. The new budget year began already on October 1 of this year, but work on most spending bills has not yet been concluded.

The House left town on December 8 after voting to agree to language of the seven-bill $820 billion omnibus package. Many lawmakers have criticized the spending levels and numerous earmarks in the massive measure. The Senate, despite the urgings of the White House, could not agree on the bill before the recess and will now pick it up again on January 20, with only limited debate scheduled. No changes to the negotiated bill are expected. Once passed by the Senate, the bill will have to be signed by President Bush.

The House left town on December 8 after voting to agree to language of the seven-bill $820 billion omnibus package. Many lawmakers have criticized the spending levels and numerous earmarks in the massive measure. The Senate, despite the urgings of the White House, could not agree on the bill before the recess and will now pick it up again on January 20, with only limited debate scheduled. No changes to the negotiated bill are expected. Once passed by the Senate, the bill will have to be signed by President Bush.

impending elimination of VOA, a vital channel of information by, from and about the United States will be shut off to Baltic ears. For its part, RFE/RL has provided concise reporting and analysis about the region, with perspectives that local media outlets in the Baltics often overlook.

The broadcasts to Central and Eastern Europe would require only about $8.9 million to remain at FY03 funding levels. While many million dollars more are being spent on radio and TV broadcasting to the Middle East, it seems illogical to cut the few million dollars to keep alive the information flow to Central and Eastern Europe. With Russian economic and political pressures throughout the region, from the oil terminal in Ventspils, Latvia, to plans to federalize Moldova and the upcoming elections in Ukraine and Georgia, the Russian Federation seems to be tempted to have an active say in its neighbor's affairs. Such concerns about Russian intentions and the recent Duma elections have added fears that Russia is straying away from democracy.

The United States must remain involved and invested in Europe. JBANC is committed to seeing that United States public diplomacy remain present and active in Central and Eastern Europe. With Russian economic and political pressures throughout the region, from the oil terminal in Ventspils, Latvia, to plans to federalize Moldova and the upcoming elections in Ukraine and Georgia, the Russian Federation seems to be tempted to have an active say in its neighbor's affairs. Such concerns about Russian intentions and the recent Duma elections have added fears that Russia is straying away from democracy.

JBANC has been involved with other U.S. organizations over the course of the year in seeking ways to halt the ending of the broadcasts.

(Continued on page 15)
Let’s Build the Victims of Communism Memorial

(Continued from page 6)

occupations, the deportations, the concentration camps in the Gulag, the suppression of democracy and religion and of most basic human rights – should be fresh in the minds of most Balts. But memories can fade quickly, especially in light of newly-restablished independence, democracy, and economic prosperity. Will our children forget? Will the world forget? Yes, if we let them.

The Baltic Assembly, made up of 20 members from each of the parliaments of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania and which meets annually, was keenly aware of this problem when at its last meeting in Vilnius (November 27-29) it called for the creation of a joint statement condemning totalitarian communism and presenting it for adoption as a resolution by the Council of Europe. This would be an important first step to take before making demands for financial compensation for the Soviet occupations and deportations.

We can keep memory alive and educate current and future generations by supporting the work of the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation. Several Baltic organizations, including the American Latvian Association and the World Federation of Free Latvians, and individuals have already made significant contributions at the Foundation’s Fifth Annual Truman-Reagan Medal of Freedom Awards reception hosted by the Embassy of the Slovak Republic on November 20, 2003. You can help too by sending a tax-deductible contribution to:

THE VICTIMS OF COMMUNISM MEMORIAL FOUNDATION
1521 Sixteenth Street, NW
Washington, DC 20036

Phone: (540) 270-6309
Fax: (202) 965-0664
Email: VOCMemorial@aol.com
victimsofcommunism.org

President Bush Grants Waiver on Military Assistance to Baltics

(Continued from page 1)

Recognizing the importance of U.S. military assistance to the Baltics, certain Members of Congress pushed to amend the law to include those nations that have concluded an accession protocol with NATO. House resolution H.R. 2550 was introduced in the summer by Baltic Caucus co-chair John Shimkus (R-IL) and supported by Representatives Doug Bereuter (R-NE), Duncan Hunter (R-CA), John Mica (R-FL), James Oberstar (D-MN), Ike Skelton (D-MO) and Joe Wilson (R-SC).

Senate resolution S.1317 was introduced by Senator Gordon Smith and co-sponsored by Senators Richard Durbin (D-IL), Joe Biden (D-DE), Patrick Leahy (D-VT) and Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska). Senators Smith and Durbin are Baltic Freedom Caucus co-chairs. The Senate resolution passed unanimously on November 7 in the Foreign Relations committee.

Baltic-Americans have also protested the freezing of military aid to Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania - countries which have been assisting the U.S. in Iraq and other military operations. For its part, JBANC has provided background information on the issue and welcomes the needed change in U.S. policy.

***
George Robertson stepped down December 17 after four years as NATO Secretary General.

The 57-year-old Scot and former British Defense Minister helped transform the Alliance, and is remembered best by Baltic-Americans for inviting Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania to join the Alliance.

During Robertson’s watch, NATO faced many new challenges. It wasn’t “your Daddy's NATO” anymore.

Robertson ensured that instead of going "out of business" NATO would go "out of area" by deploying troops outside Europe and North America for the first time and proving that it was ready to deal with new global security threats. He became the first NATO chief to invoke the alliance's Article 5 mutual defense clause following the 9/11 attacks on the United States.

Setting out to prove that NATO was relevant in a world facing threats of terror and the spread of weapons of mass destruction, Robertson persuaded allies in acquiring new capabilities and developed plans for a rapid response force and an overhaul of the alliance's command structure. The Prague Summit’s highlight was the invitation to seven nations to join NATO, which enlarges from 19 to 26 members in 2004.

Robertson begins a new career as deputy head of a British telecommunications company.

His successor at NATO will be former Dutch Foreign Minister Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, who becomes NATO’s new Secretary General on January 5.

Broadcasting to Baltics Nears End

Many appeals have been sent to congressional appropriators and leaders and to the White House over the course of the year. There has been great support for keeping the Baltic language services alive, notably from Congressman John Shimkus and Senator Richard Durbin. Members of the Lithuanian American Council met with House Speaker Dennis Hastert on November 10, hoping in the eleventh hour that the Speaker would convince House Republican leaders, including House CJS subcommittee chairman Frank Wolf (R-VA), to reverse course on the issue.

There have been highs and lows in the process. The Broadcasting Board of Governors, the Office of Management and Budget and the President did not include funding for the radios in the original budget request for FY 2004. Positive efforts to restore funding for the radios were noted in three of the four subcommittees that dealt with the issue. Senate Foreign Relations Committee chairman Richard Lugar (R-IN) is still investing time and effort to preserve an effective U.S. public diplomacy component and has been supportive of the effort to have the U.S. stay connected to the Baltics through VOA and RFE/RL.

Following Senate appropriations action on the CJS bill a House and Senate conference convened on November 19. House leadership prevailed and no provisions for funding the services were included in the bill. The conference report H. Rept. 108-401 was filed November 25.

Karl Altau
The JBANC Board and staff wish our Chronicle readers Best Wishes for the Holidays and a successful 2004 - the year in which the Baltics finally join NATO!

Thank you for your support!

---

Happy Holidays From JBANC!