

**Remarks of Frank Koszorus, Jr. on the Occasion of the Enlargement of NATO,
Corcoran Gallery of Art, Monday, March 29, 2004**

It is a great honor for me on behalf of the Central East European Coalition to address the Heads of State present this evening, Your Excellencies, Defense Secretary Rumsfeld, Members of Congress and Distinguished Guests.

Our Coalition includes 18 national membership organizations representing more than 20 million Americans who trace their heritage to Central and Eastern Europe.

For over ten years the CEEC has vigorously and successfully advocated NATO's enlargement to include every European country that wishes to join NATO and satisfies the alliance's membership criteria. As Americans, we believe that an enlarged NATO – an alliance consisting of democratic, stable and secure countries that adhere to Western values and as an organization of collective defense -- is in the vital interest of the United States. Indeed, we also believe that the United States must remain engaged in Europe and NATO to secure the post-Cold War peace on the continent, confront the new challenges of the 21st century and prevail in the war against international terrorism.

On behalf of the CEEC, I want to thank all those who over the years shared this vision and on a truly bi-partisan basis contributed to making enlargement a reality. While there are too many to name – we would be here all night -- I would be remiss, if I didn't mention three individuals whom you all know as tireless and effective champions of expansion – Jan Nowak, Myra Lenard and Cas Lenard.

Myra reflected the CEEC's policy in her 1999 U.S. News & World Report interview, when she said the CEEC supports the "open door" policy and will not stop advocating the continued enlargement of the Alliance. Well, it didn't, and here we are.

While we celebrate today, and celebrate we must, we realize that our work is far from complete. First, Albania, Croatia, Macedonia are aspirants and we must ensure that they as well as countries formerly dominated by the Soviet Union also have an equal opportunity to join the alliance and thereby contribute to the stability of the region and consolidate a Europe that, in President Bush's words, is whole and free.

Second, since an indispensable component of security in Central and Eastern Europe is a commitment to democracy, including the respect for the rule of law, human and minority rights, we must ensure that those values are strengthened to give NATO not only military personnel and military capabilities, but also the values that defined the Alliance for decades and gave it the moral strength to prevail in the Cold War.

Then, just as we did in 1989, our children on both sides of the Atlantic will be able to say, "yes, we are also part of the greatest military alliance known to mankind."