

Alexander Vershbow

Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs

Alexander Vershbow is currently the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs (ISA). In this capacity, Ambassador Vershbow has responsibility for coordinating U.S. security and defense policies relating to the nations and international organizations of Europe (including NATO), the Middle East and Africa.

Alexander Vershbow came to DOD after a 32-year career with the U.S. Foreign Service. He served as U.S. Ambassador to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (1998-2001); U.S. Ambassador to the Russian Federation (2001-2005); and U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Korea (2005-2008). He held numerous senior positions in Washington, including Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for European Affairs at the National Security Council (1994-97) and State Department Director for Soviet Union Affairs (1988-91). During his career, he was centrally involved in strengthening U.S. defense relations with allies in Europe and Asia and in transforming NATO and other European security organizations to meet post-Cold War challenges. He also was centrally involved in efforts to promote democracy and human rights in the former Soviet Union.

Alexander Vershbow is a long-time student of Russian Affairs and international relations. He received a B.A. in Russian and East European Studies from Yale University (1974) and a Master's Degree in International Relations and Certificate of the Russian Institute from Columbia University (1976). He was the first recipient of the Department of Defense's Joseph J. Kruzel Award for his contributions to peace in the former Yugoslavia (1997).

Other awards include the State Department's Cordell Hull Award for Economic Achievement for his contributions to negotiations on the Korea-U.S. Free Trade Agreement (2007); the American Bar Association's Ambassador's Award for his advocacy of the democracy, human rights and rule of law in Russia (2004); the State Department's Distinguished Service Award for his work as Ambassador to NATO (2001); and the Anatoly Sharansky Freedom Award of the Union of Councils of Soviet Jews for his work in advancing the cause of Jewish emigration from the USSR (1990).

Ambassador Vershbow was born in Boston, Massachusetts. His wife, Lisa, is a prominent designer of contemporary jewelry.