

Hearing of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe “NATO Enlargement and the Bucharest Summit”

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Chairman Hastings, Co-Chairman Cardin, Members of the Commission –

It is an honor to testify today.

May I begin by taking this opportunity to congratulate the Helsinki Commission on holding this hearing on the crucial topic of NATO enlargement and the upcoming Bucharest Summit. The hearing follows in the tradition of the careful scrutiny given to the two most recent rounds of enlargement by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, on whose staff I had the privilege of serving from 1994 to 2005.

The decision to extend invitations to three former members of the Warsaw Pact – Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic – was anything but a “slam dunk,” despite assertions to the contrary by some historians. Nor should it have been, for many debatable issues were involved. My Republican colleague and I were entrusted with the responsibility of structuring hearings, editing committee publications, and organizing the floor debate – a process that extended over several years. The committee held no fewer than a dozen hearings, including six in October and November 1997. The 1997 hearing topics included the Strategic Rationale for NATO Enlargement; Pros and Cons of Enlargement; the Qualifications of Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic for Membership; Costs, Benefits, Burden-Sharing and Military Implications of Enlargement; the NATO-Russia Relationship; and an unusual, concluding hearing in which representatives of interested organizations and individual American citizens gave their views on enlargement. A full record of these hearings, plus voluminous appendices is contained in a 552-page committee report, “The Debate on NATO Enlargement” (S. Hrg. 105-285).

The Foreign Relations Committee voted 16 to 2 in favor of sending the recommended amendment to the 1949 North Atlantic Treaty to the Senate floor, where after seven days of morning-to-night debate it was ratified on April 30, 1998 by a vote of 80 to 19. In a notable gesture of bipartisanship, the Republican majority delegated the responsibility of floor managing the bill to Senator Biden of the minority. I have been told by officials of several NATO partner nations that no other country’s parliament came close to the United States Senate’s exhaustive scrutiny of enlargement.

The next round of enlargement, which added Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia to the Alliance, was non-controversial. It culminated in a unanimous vote of the U.S. Senate on May 8, 2003.

The Alliance now faces the decision of whether to embark upon another round of enlargement. Mr. Chairman, I strongly support extending invitations to membership to Croatia, Albania, and Macedonia at the Bucharest NATO Summit. I also support, but with reservations, granting Membership Action Plans to Georgia and Ukraine at Bucharest.

Each candidate country's Membership Action Plan or "MAP" lays out military, political, and economic reforms necessary for membership. It is to the non-military issues, and to broader strategic considerations that I will confine my remarks.

Of the three candidates, Croatia has the strongest case for membership. It is the only one given a "free" designation by Freedom House in its 2007 "Freedom in the World" survey. (Albania and Macedonia received "partly free" status, with Albania also gaining an "upward trend arrow" due to its increased efforts to combat corruption.) A relatively wealthy, Western-looking country, Croatia has gradually recovered from the bloody and highly destructive war with Serbia of 1991-95, during which elements of its own ethnic Serb population set up a secessionist mini-state in the Krajina region, not subdued militarily until the summer of 1995. After some initial hesitation, Zagreb has subsequently resettled all but a few thousand of the more than 200,000 Serb refugees who fled from the Krajina, Western Slavonia, and Northern Dalmatia in the wake of the Croatian re-conquest. Unfortunately, there have been reports that the local population has harassed Serbs who have attempted to return to their prewar property.

Croatia's two leading political figures, President Stjepan Mesić and Prime Minister Ivo Sanader, while belonging to different parties, are both democrats. Sanader, in particular, deserves credit for having successfully reformed the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ), which the late President Franjo Tudjman had run in a fascist manner. Parliamentary elections held in November 2007 were judged to be free and fair, but it took nearly seven weeks of post-election negotiations until Sanader was able to put together a coalition government in mid-January 2008. The OSCE's Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) judged that the Croatian elections had been "administered transparently, professionally, and represented further progress in fully meeting OSCE commitments for democratic elections."

In August 2007, Croatia and Slovenia agreed to seek a settlement of a long-standing border dispute through the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

Some anti-democratic, right-wing elements do remain active in Croatia, especially among veterans' groups that resent the government's cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) at The Hague. Last month a Croatian reporter for Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty received a death threat because of his reporting about the trial of a suspected Croatian war criminal. Such groups and activities, however, appear to be marginal, albeit troubling, remnants of the Tudjman era.

Support for NATO membership languished at about 30% until the Zagreb government undertook a public education campaign. That project, and the near-victory of the Radical Party in last month's elections in Serbia, combined to push support over the 50% mark by mid-February. The Kosovo-related mob violence last month in Belgrade, including against the

Embassy of Croatia, may serve to increase pro-NATO sentiment even further. In fact, a poll released last weekend put support at 67%.

Albania has made remarkable political and economic strides in the less than two decades since its people cast off Europe's most retrograde and paranoid communist dictatorship. The 1990's saw several violent outbreaks, including one in the wake of a pyramid scheme that wiped out the life savings of thousands of citizens. Although many parts of the country are still poverty-stricken, Albania has recently shed the dubious distinction of being Europe's poorest state, and the capital Tirana is in the midst of a building boom.

Albania's political life is raucous and often centered on disputes among a few leading personalities. Seven parties are represented in parliament. In July 2007, it took four ballots, which included opposition boycotts, before the parliament elected Bamir Topi as the country's new president. The government is implementing a comprehensive reform program of the judiciary and the electoral system. Progress has been made against corruption and organized crime, but they remain serious problems.

Albania is religiously diverse, with about half its population Muslim and the rest divided between Orthodox Christianity and Roman Catholicism. The government emphasizes the need for inter-communal tolerance, and friction is at a relatively low level. All groups support NATO membership, with more than 90% of the populace in favor.

Despite its own post-communist problems, Tirana has an admirable record of being a prudent, good neighbor. During the Kosovo war of 1999, Albania took in hundreds of thousands of refugees. With Kosovo now independent, the government has made the completion of a modern highway between Tirana and Priština a top priority. Albania took a responsible stance during the inter-ethnic armed clashes in Macedonia in 2001, eschewing any desire for a "Greater Albania." Its relations with the third bordering country containing an Albanian minority, Montenegro, are excellent.

The third candidate country, Macedonia, has also made recent, notable progress, but its path to membership may be the most difficult. Unlike Croatia and Albania, where the titular nationality accounts for about ninety per cent of the population, Macedonian Slavs total only about 64% with Albanians comprising about 25%, and Turks, Roma, Serbs, and others making up the rest. It is a country, parts of whose territory at various times has been claimed by Bulgaria, Serbia, and Greece.

Relations between Orthodox Macedonian Slavs and ethnic Albanians have been very contentious, nearly erupting into civil war in 2001 until the U.S. and the European Union brokered the Ohrid Framework Agreement, whose decentralization provides enhanced minority rights in language and education and thereby has kept a tenuous peace ever since. The national government, which traditionally includes an ethnic Albanian party in the ruling coalition, has made good faith efforts at police, judicial, and economic reforms. Macedonia has a fully professional, multi-ethnic army, and all groups in the country strongly support NATO membership. Like Albania, Macedonia hosted hundreds of thousands of refugees from Kosovo during the war in 1999.

Presenting the most serious barrier to NATO membership is the issue of the country's very name. Greece considers Skopje's use of "Macedonia" a violation of its own cultural patrimony, and although Athens gave up its trade embargo in 1995, nearly two decades of negotiations still have not yielded an agreement. Skopje has declared that it harbors no designs on Greek territory. Its willingness to accept a "Double Formula" compromise, by which the country is known internationally as the Republic of Macedonia, but by another name by Greece, has not satisfied Athens, and it and most other EU members continue to use the provisional "The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" or FYROM. The name issue is not a consideration in U.S. support for Macedonia's NATO candidacy, since Washington has joined well over one hundred other countries in recognizing the Republic of Macedonia as the official name, but if no compromise is reached before the Bucharest Summit, Greece threatens to veto Skopje's membership bid, an action which would be extremely unwise and regrettable.

Mr. Chairman, I support the issuing at the Bucharest Summit of NATO membership invitations to all three candidates: Croatia, Albania, and Macedonia. I believe that all three fulfill the requirements for Alliance membership, and all – especially Macedonia and Albania -- have been enthusiastic contributors to Alliance military operations. Nonetheless, some analysts are opposed to their inclusion on institutional or geo-strategic grounds. Allow me to address some of these concerns.

NATO makes decisions on a consensus principle. Some believe that further enlargement would severely complicate Alliance business. But before Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic joined, skeptics similarly warned that increasing the membership would seriously complicate decision-making. Their fears have proved to be unfounded. Achieving consensus among nineteen members was no more difficult than it had been among sixteen, and after the "big bang" enlargement of 2004, twenty-six members have worked together relatively harmoniously. In fact, most of the ten countries of Central and Eastern Europe that joined in the last two rounds are closely tied to the United States by bonds of history, culture, kinship, and world-view and tend to follow Washington's lead.

I find unconvincing the related argument that the addition of Croatia, Macedonia, and Albania would somehow undermine the Alliance's stability. On the contrary, membership in NATO has defused inter-ethnic rivalries in Romania, Slovakia, and Bulgaria and several international rivalries, including between Poland and Germany, Romania and Hungary, Romania and Slovakia, and Slovenia and Italy.

Some critics complain that Albania and Macedonia would become "consumers of," not "contributors to" the security of the North Atlantic area. This assertion strikes me as odd, given the fact that all three candidates have put their blood and treasure on the line by contributing to NATO operations in Afghanistan, and Albania and Macedonia to the U.S.-led effort in Iraq. Two weeks ago the Croatian Minister of Defense declared that his country wants to contribute to the full spectrum of NATO operations. Moreover, the "consumer/contributor" criterion has been regularly misconstrued. In the detailed Senate floor debate in 1998 on the inclusion of Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic, the proponents of enlargement, echoing a Pentagon assessment, made clear that becoming a net-contributor was a process. Only Poland was judged

able to become a net-contributor immediately upon accession; it would take Hungary and the Czech Republic a few more years to attain that status. Yet all three countries joined NATO in 1999.

It is also true, as many point out, that the Alliance is currently wrestling with other weighty problems, above all the unwillingness of several European members to commit troops to combat roles in Afghanistan. But, as former President Lyndon Johnson used to say, surely we can walk and chew gum at the same time. The addition of three spirited new members might even have a salutary effect upon some of the more hesitant, older ones.

Recently a tactical argument has been put forward that several years from now Ukraine and Georgia may be ready for membership, but supposedly they would have to be included in a larger group of candidate countries in order to gain the necessary unanimous support. Hence, the argument goes, it would be better to admit only Croatia at the Bucharest Summit, and leave Albania and Macedonia for the next round.

I am not sure that even the fundamental assumption is correct. It is quite possible that in a few years fully qualified Ukraine and Georgia would quickly gain admittance, with or without other candidates. Even if that does not prove to be true, the argument strikes me as flawed. First of all, it cavalierly plays with the security concerns of Albania and Macedonia as if they were expendable pieces on a chessboard. Might they not be threatened before the next NATO summit comes around? Moreover, the argument overlooks the fact that one or more additional candidates may be qualified by the time Ukraine and Georgia are ready. Montenegro readily comes to mind.

An even more interesting possibility, less remote than is often supposed, is that already qualified, non-candidate countries may change their policies and apply for membership. I am talking principally about Finland, Sweden, or Austria. Currently majority sentiment in all three countries is against NATO membership, but influential segments of opinion are pro-membership. In Finland, for example, a working group is preparing a Defense White Paper to be presented to parliament next fall, in which NATO membership is reportedly an option being considered.

Finally, some assert that the Kosovo crisis necessitates a postponement of the enlargement process in the Western Balkans. On the contrary, the challenge of Kosovo *strengthens* the case for enlargement in Bucharest. If the government in Belgrade persists in a policy of self-isolation from the Euro-Atlantic community and perhaps even gravitates toward temporarily becoming a semi-satellite of Russia, then it would be a useful insurance policy to have NATO members on most of Serbia's borders (Croatia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Macedonia) and on the border with northern Kosovo (Albania).

The granting of MAPs to Ukraine and/or Georgia at the Bucharest Summit appears to me to be more problematic than the decision on invitations to membership for Croatia, Albania, and Macedonia. Ukraine rates a "free" and Georgia a "partly free" overall designation in Freedom House's "Freedom in the World 2007" survey, with Ukraine scoring higher than Georgia -- and Macedonia and Albania, for that matter -- on civil liberties, at the same level as Croatia.

No one can doubt Ukraine's geo-strategic importance. A stable, democratic Ukraine inside NATO would dramatically expand the zone of stability in Europe. It is precisely because of Ukraine's importance that the Alliance must give its qualifications very careful scrutiny.

On the positive side, over the past two years Ukraine has conducted two free and fair parliamentary elections and has seen a peaceful change of administrations. The new government in Kyiv led by Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko has gotten off to a promising start by making the country ready for accession to the World Trade Organization and by moving to curb the serious corruption that has afflicted the economy.

During the past decade Ukraine has already been an active participant in Alliance peacekeeping and military operations, including in a combat role in Iraq in 2004-05. In April 2005, NATO and Ukraine launched an Intensified Dialogue on membership. On January 15 the country's three top elected officials – President Viktor Yushchenko, Prime Minister Tymoshenko, and Parliamentary Speaker Arseny Yatsenyuk – sent a letter to NATO, asking that the Alliance consider offering Ukraine a MAP at the Bucharest Summit.

On the negative side, Ukraine's democracy remains fractious, and sometimes dysfunctional. In fact, for over a month, the parliament has been in a forced recess as the opposition blocked the legislature to protest the above-mentioned joint letter to NATO. The opponents, it must be said, have lost some credibility through the publication of official documents showing that when Party of Regions leader Viktor Yanukovich was Prime Minister from 2002 to 2004, he supported Ukraine's drive to NATO membership, including the annual NATO-Ukraine "Action Plans" that were similar to MAPs.

Whether the blocking maneuver in parliament is rooted in political opportunism or principled opposition, the fact remains that overall popular support for joining NATO currently stands at only about 20%. The political leadership has said that the electorate would have to show its backing in a national referendum before the government makes a request for membership. Three years after the Orange Revolution, Ukraine remains a sharply polarized country.

Unlike Ukraine, in Georgia there is strong support for NATO membership, more than 76% having voted for it in a national referendum in January 2008. NATO and Georgia entered into an Intensified Dialogue on membership in September 2006. The small country in the Caucasus, fractured shortly after its post-Soviet independence by civil war and violent secessionist movements, has been extraordinarily willing to commit its troops to Alliance missions, including combat operations. In fact, Georgia now is one of the leading non-U.S. contributors to the coalition forces in Iraq.

Until last fall, Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili, the architect of the 2003 Rose Revolution, was seen in the West as an exemplar of democracy. His reputation, however, has been tarnished, first by the excessive force used by police in breaking up anti-government demonstrations in November 2007, and then by opponents' insistent allegations of electoral irregularities in the January 2008 presidential elections. It should be added that respected international observers, while noting problems, judged the elections to have been generally fair.

Georgia's relations with its Russian neighbor are acrimonious. Moscow has levied economic sanctions against Tbilisi and maintains a constant propaganda barrage against President Saakashvili. Russian troops have recently withdrawn from their bases in Georgia, but Russian "peacekeepers" continue to patrol in the breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Moscow may utilize the Kosovo situation to recognize one or both of these two secessionist regimes.

Mr. Chairman, as was explicitly the case in the last two rounds of NATO enlargement, relations with Russia must be a factor in our decision. Taking the Kremlin into consideration does *not*, of course, mean giving it a veto. Every independent country has the sovereign right to choose its own foreign and security policy. That includes formerly communist-ruled Croatia, Albania, and Macedonia as well as former Soviet republics Ukraine and Georgia.

Moreover, NATO is not an offensive alliance. It never had plans for launching an unprovoked attack on the U.S.S.R. (unlike the Warsaw Pact's battle plans for conquering Western Europe), and it has no plans to invade Russia now. If Russian President Vladimir Putin views NATO as a potential aggressor, his attitude has more to do with a KGB-inculcated, zero-sum view of the world than with reality. His recent comment about targeting Russian nuclear-armed missiles on Ukraine if it joins NATO is a totally unacceptable attempt at intimidation and reveals an unwillingness to accept the fact that Kyiv is independent of Moscow.

U.S. policy toward Russia can be firm and, at the same time, avoid being gratuitously provocative. Extending membership invitations to the three Balkan candidates or granting MAPs to Ukraine and Georgia, if they qualify, would *not* fall into the gratuitously provocative category. On the contrary, a rational, twenty-first century Kremlin assessment would welcome increased stability on its borders. Unfortunately, Putin and his circle seem to be mired in the mindset of a nineteenth-century Great Power, desirous of weak, unstable neighbors.

President Putin -- who, in May, will become Prime Minister Putin -- plans to attend the Bucharest Summit. Any negative decisions there regarding NATO enlargement would likely be viewed as acquiescence to his opposition. This is an impression I would not wish to be conveyed, but in itself it is not sufficient reason for the Alliance to move forward. At the end of the day, each candidacy, whether for membership or for a MAP, should be evaluated on its own merits.

On that basis, I narrowly support offering MAPs to Ukraine and Georgia at the Bucharest Summit. Despite the fact that receiving a MAP is not a guarantee of a later offer of membership, it nonetheless is a watershed in the membership process that makes eventual success highly probable, if not inevitable. Both countries, in my opinion, still have room for major improvement in their domestic politics. This May, Georgia will hold parliamentary elections, which will offer an opportunity to reassure its friends that its democracy is solid. Ukraine must demonstrate that its bitterly antagonistic political rivals can cooperate to effect economic progress and further reduce corruption, and conduct a public information campaign on NATO so that popular support for membership can grow substantially from its current extremely low level.

It has been reported that some Western European allies are inclined to oppose granting MAPs to Ukraine and Georgia. I would like to emphasize that if NATO does decide *not* to grant the two MAPs at Bucharest, it should explicitly declare that the door is still open to both countries, should express willingness immediately to consult with them on remaining actions to be taken, and should stress that Kyiv and Tbilisi will receive MAPs upon their satisfactory meeting of all the criteria, a development which might occur in advance of the sixtieth anniversary NATO summit in 2009.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my testimony. I would be happy to answer any questions the Members of the Commission wish to pose.