

NATO ENLARGEMENT: A VIEW FROM THE CANDIDATE COUNTRIES

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WEDNESDAY, MAY 1, 2002

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EUROPE,
COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS,
Washington, DC.

The Subcommittee met, pursuant to call, at 1 p.m. in Room 2172, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Elton Gallegly (Chairman of the Committee) presiding.

Mr. GILMAN. The Committee will come to order.

Our Chairman is on his way from voting and will be here momentarily, but in the meantime we will try to save some time and get underway.

I would like to thank the Chairman, Chairman Gallegly, for calling this important and timely hearing today. The proposed NATO enlargement will not only contribute to the stability and security of the entire Euro-Atlantic area, and strengthen the effectiveness of the alliance, but will preserve its ability to perform its core functions of a common defense which is so important.

Over the past 45 years NATO's membership of like-bonded allies working together has fundamentally improved the nature of relations between the member states. Moreover, the commitment by all allies to defend one another's territories has proven in its value as an anchor of stability and confidence in Europe.

This commitment has helped allied countries develop powerful and flexible military capabilities firmly under political control. NATO's reliance on collective defense is ensured that no single ally is forced to rely upon its own national efforts alone in dealing with basic security challenges.

Sharing these benefits with new members can help extend security and stability throughout Europe. One obvious example of the benefit of expanding NATO membership is that states aspiring to join NATO are likely to dramatically modify their behavior. Several states have resolved longstanding disputes over minority rights and borders, including Hungary and Romania, Romania and the Ukraine, and Hungary and Slovakia, not least of which make themselves more acceptable partners to NATO countries.

Also, as operations in Bosnia and Kosovo demonstrate, NATO, in addition to providing a collective defense for its own members, has also begun to embrace a cooperative security mission. The NATO door should remain open for all those nations who meet the criteria.

And I will be pleased to yield to Mr. Hillard.

Mr. HILLARD. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, I had planned on just submitting my comments for the record, but because the fact the Chairperson is on his way in, I think I am going to read it while he is getting himself together.

Mr. Chairman, Members and distinguished guests, we are now advancing to the challenge of a global enlargement for our international European community. As we enter into these hearings today, let us be aware of the importance of all the political qualifications of each nation. Whereas I am in favor of enlargement of NATO, I am also in favor of NATO maintaining its strength. A weaker NATO does not serve the European community nor does it serve our true international community. We must continue to promote peace in all regions. After all, we must be very concerned of the fact that the two major world wars fought in our lifetime and even before our lifetime were fought on the continent of Europe primarily.

In order to prevent this, perhaps we should encourage all the aspiring countries to focus their efforts on preparing future membership by making full use of all of the membership action plans aspects, but at the same time NATO needs to continue the undertakings of its own internal preparation so that it will be able to absorb to aspiring countries without weakening its mission or without weakening its preparedness and its readiness.

So with that said, Mr. Chairman, I would just like the rest of my statement to be included in the record.

Mr. GILMAN. Without objection.

Mr. HILLARD. Thank you very much.

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Engel.

Mr. ENGEL. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is good to be here this afternoon. It is good to see so many wonderful Ambassadors and good friends here.

I have long been a supporter of NATO expansion because I think that it helps the stability of the alliance, the alliance between Europe and North America, and I believe that many of the countries that are trying to get into NATO are very worthy of NATO admission.

I was delighted several years ago when NATO expanded, thought that NATO should have expanded even more, and now I am a strong supporter of NATO expanding to the greatest degree. I know there are criteria, but I do think that the major criteria is that all the nations that are here are eager to get into NATO, eager to do whatever is necessary to meet the criteria.

And as somebody who supports a NATO expansion, I welcome these hearings today. I chair the Albanian Issues Caucus. I know the Ambassador from Albania is here, and I certainly am a strong supporter of Albanian admission to NATO, but there are many, many other countries here I think that deserve consideration as well, and I hope these hearings will go a long way.

One of the realities of the change in the climate of Europe with the fall of the Soviet Union has been that we have a golden opportunity, I believe, to really have a partnership in both what was western and eastern Europe, and I do not believe that NATO expansion should be threatening to Russia or should be something

that Russia opposes. I think that, given the right—in the right context, this can be a very positive thing for all the countries of Europe and North American, including Russia.

So I look forward to listening to all the Ambassadors. I wish everyone of them well, and good luck, and do hope that in the very near future all of them will be admitted to NATO. Thank you.

Mr. GALLEGLY. Thank you, Mr. Engel.

Today, the European Subcommittee holds its second hearing on the issue of NATO and enlargement.

Would you please hold all my calls? Must be a higher authority. [Laughter.]

I have had a lot of things happen in my life that is silencing, but I think this one—— [Laughter.]

It was probably a telemarketing call. We do not need any. [Laughter.]

Today, the European Subcommittee holds its second hearing on the issue of NATO and enlargement.

Just 2 years ago this month, nine nations of Europe who were not included in the last round of NATO enlargement met in Vilnius, Lithuania, and proclaimed their intentions to continue to seek NATO membership at the next round of the NATO enlargement.

That enlargement will take place in November at Prague and those nine nations, joined now by Croatia, are here today to explain why their countries wish to join this alliance and what they have done to meet NATO qualifications.

As we have heard representatives of our government explain, the U.S. has three priorities for the Prague Summit. One of those priorities is the addition of new members into the alliance, a priority many of us in the Congress strongly support.

As I said 2 weeks ago at our first hearing, enlarging NATO can contribute to our overall security because new nations in the alliance will contribute to the overall stability and security of Europe.

These 10 aspirant countries not only recognize the importance and relevance of NATO to themselves as both a political organization and a military alliance committed to defending its members, but their membership in NATO will validate the work they have done over the past 10 years to develop democratic structures, market economies, modernized militaries and to address the important legal and social issues which NATO considers important to the values espoused by the alliance.

Each of these Ambassadors here today represent countries who consider NATO membership one their highest aspirations.

Only in America. [Laughter.]

From what we have heard and seen thus far, remarkable process across the spectrum of reforms have been made in each country.

Our message today is one of hope and encouragement. NATO has not made a decision on which of you will receive invitations at Prague. Therefore, we encourage you to continue to work hard to meet NATO's requirements between now and Prague, and to commit your nations to continue those efforts beyond November no matter what the outcome.

We in the Congress welcome your interest in joining the alliance. We salute your commitment and dedication to meeting NATO

standards. We congratulate you for all the achievements you have made thus far, and we look forward to seeing you back here in the future, not as an aspirant nations, but as full NATO members.

I look forward to hearing your testimony today, and the first witness we have is our friend from Bulgaria, Ambassador Elena Poptodorova. That is easier than Gallegly, right.

Welcome, Ambassador.

**STATEMENT OF HER EXCELLENCY ELENA POPTODOROVA,
AMBASSADOR OF BULGARIA**

Ambassador POPTODOROVA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, distinguished Members of the Committee, Ambassadors, ladies and gentlemen.

I almost need not speak after all the interventions that were made, so thank you all really. Thank you, Chairman. Thank you, Representatives, for having been so favorable in opening this hearing. But I do feel greatly honored to face the Committee, to speak to this Committee, and moreover, to do so on behalf of my fellow Ambassadors who all of us belong to the Vilnius group of countries.

My task today is to give a brief overview of why we believe NATO enlargement is relevant, but not only through the perspective of—

Mr. GALLEGLY. Ambassador, you know, the quarterly evaluation of my staff's competence is coming up shortly. I unplugged all the wires down there. If you will just forgive us for a second. The staff has tried to check with maintenance.

Did I do it? I pushed something.

Madam Ambassador, please forgive the interruption.

Ambassador POPTODOROVA. Thank you, Chairman.

I was just saying that my modest ambition will be to give a brief outline of why we believe NATO is relevant not only from the perspective of aspirant countries, but also from the American perspective because we believe it is a two-way street process.

The main message we want to convey to you today is that robust NATO enlargement in Prague will contribute to the victory against terrorism and all related risks, threats and challenges. In other words, the Euro-Atlantic interest of our countries, we believe, coincides with America's interest to acquire new, reliable allies in the war on terrorism, and also to complete the project of Europe whole, free and secure; in simple terms, this is the vision which President Bush himself had outlined in Warsaw—to create a united Europe from the Baltic to the Black Sea.

All our contrives share the same priority: European and Euro-Atlantic institutions, and here comes the legitimate question, indeed, which you yourself, sir, posed. Why do we believe that our countries are eligible and should be considered in a positive way?

I think in the first place we can claim, I am confident we can claim, to be functioning democracies. It is not a yet full 13 years since the fall of the Berlin Wall, which means less than a generation span of time. And yet we can say that the peoples of Central and Eastern Europe have made tremendous strides since the fall of communism in building a political framework, the necessary political foundation to guarantee the irrevocability of democratic institutions.

It has not been easy. It still is not easy. And yet I can assure you that we have gone through hard work and made hard choices for all of us. It has meant governments coming to power and falling out of power because expectations, hopes were riding high, and they could not be met automatically and quickly.

But what we have today is a working democracy. We have smooth transition of government. We have free exchange of ideas. We have healthy multi-party systems in our countries, with strong opposition, just like here.

Our role model, I must say, for freedom, independence and democracy has always been the United States, and you have long been the source of inspiration and vision for Central and Eastern Europe. Moreover, at the beginning of the changes, it was your expert teams who came over to our countries and helped us build the foundations of parliamentary democracy in our states.

I would also remind you that during the years of oppression millions of our citizens came over here to look for a better life, and today we have kind of a constituency, we share a constituency with you, if you permit, because there are ethnic groups of each of our nations who are willing to help us in our efforts to become formally part of the free and democratic world.

Secondly, our hard work in all areas ranging from military reform to economic reform, from structural changes to legislative and regulatory frameworks will continue because it is in our own interest, in the interest of our respective countries.

However, on the other hand, a recognition that we are moving along the right path, that we add value and would be welcome in the most successful security alliance in the 20th century will reaffirm to our nations that we are already beyond the point of return; that democracy, freedom and independence, and the gains and responsibilities that they represent are the only ones our children and grandchildren will ever know in the future.

You should know that all of us seated together in front of you represent no less than 60 million people, and these people are firmly supporting the accession of our countries to NATO. We are here because we are preparing to take our place as part of Europe whole and free.

At the Washington Summit in 1999, the fiftieth anniversary of the alliance, a communique was issued which named nine countries aspiring for NATO, and started a process known as the MAP process. This process demonstrated our countries' commitment in more concrete terms.

The last round of enlargement was successful, and we believe that this will be a prelude to what will be now a very robust enlargement in Prague. But on the other hand, this first round of enlargement posed a series of questions, new questions, and we believe that the MAP process will give answers to these questions.

Successful MAP implementation enables us to make substantive contributions to European security and NATO's future viability and efficiency, an issue which was raised by the distinguished representative in his introductory remarks.

This Vilnius group, sir, was founded in May 2000 when the Foreign Ministers of our countries met in Vilnius, Lithuania for the first time to demonstrate their solidarity and commitment to the

creation of a Europe whole and free in alliance with the United States and Canada. That was how the Vilnius group was born, and we know that the whole is much greater than the sum of parts. Therefore, we decided and we still continue to test the efficiency of this group.

At first there was skepticism, particularly in Europe. But we persisted. We had a series of meetings of different sets of ministers. We had the Defense Ministers who met in Sofia in October, 2000; Foreign Ministers in Brussels in December, 2000; then in Bled, Slovenia in April, 2001. I really ought to save time in listing all these meetings, But you should know that we had them at all important political levels—Foreign Ministers, Defense Ministers, Prime Ministers, Presidents.

I would only mention the Bucharest meeting, which was the last one, and which practically set a new phrase with the perception of robust enlargement. That meeting was attended by Secretary of State Armitage, who was entirely supportive of that approach.

I would also like to remind you that the NATO Parliamentary Assembly meets in Sofia, the capital of my own country, at the end of this month, and I would like to encourage all of you—if not all, at least a good number of you—to attend this parliamentary assembly in Sofia.

There is one more meeting, and also very important one, to which I would also urge you to go. It is the Riga Summit on July 5 and 6, and that will be practically the last summit of the V-10 at the level of Prime Ministers and Baltic Presidents before Prague in November.

We succeeded in patching up and working on smaller formats, also sub-regional formats, the Baltic countries, Slovakia with its Visegrad partners, the four Balkan countries—Bulgaria, Romania, Greece and Turkey plus Albania and Macedonia, who were added to this format. Croatia was included in V-10 and in the MAP process which helped the process of reform.

So this is a very vibrant group which tries to keep abreast of the demands of the criteria which are being legitimately posed by our NATO partners.

We have all contributed to NATO-led missions in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo. We have volunteered to provide troops, airspace, airfields, and whatever support we could to the U.S. in the war against terrorism. We have already acted like NATO allies because we feel we can do and make, indeed, an important contribution to the community of values to which we all belong.

We believe that we can add security and not just be consumers of security, that we can add value to the alliance both militarily and politically. Be it air surveillance in the Baltics or mountain troops of Romania, the expertise in demining in Slovenia, or the airfields in Southeastern Europe, we do believe that in our modest scope we add to the strength and vitality of NATO.

An invitation to us to join NATO will solidify a core alliance of those whose trust and credibility can be counted on. We will not be just new allies, we will be a part of a stronger, more effective, new alliance capable of responding to the entire range of modern threats.

Mr. Chairman, distinguished Members, the arrangements for this hearing are such that after having had the privilege of speaking on behalf of my colleagues, each one of us has been graciously given the opportunity to say a few words about one's own country.

So now I take my Vilnius or collective hat off and put my Bulgarian hat on, and I will briefly tell you what Bulgaria has done in its earnest desire to be an eligible, qualifiable candidate in Prague.

I would like to mention just specific facts, and I would also like to mention problems because I would betray my duty if I did not mention what the outstanding issues before us are as well.

First of all, however, I would like to mention when we have been in solidarity with the U.S., in particular, and with NATO as an alliance.

Very few know that it was back in 1991, at the time of the Gulf War, when the Bulgarian parliament voted for a Bulgarian contingent to join the anti-Saddam campaign. So that was good 11 years ago. Then we had a vote in parliament which was entirely supportive of joining the anti-Saddam war.

SFOR and KFOR are operations I already mentioned, and that applies to Bulgaria as well. There is one fact which I would like to mention with regard to our contribution to Afghanistan. People know that we have offered an airfield for U.S. aircraft to refuel. However, very few know that this is the first military base ever offered to a foreign country, to a foreign ally.

Right now Bulgaria is a non-permanent member of the Security Council. We happen to have this position at a very troubled time. We have excellent cooperation with the U.S. delegation, particularly on the Middle East and in the sponsoring and the adoption of the resolutions that were passed.

We expect to take over the chairmanship of the OSCE, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, in 2004. There, again, we have excellent cooperation with your delegation, sir, particularly in the field of human rights. Similar is the cooperation with the U.S. in the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in The Hague and other international organizations.

I am listing all these examples just to illustrate that when we say that we are de facto allies, this is not a vain terminology, but it is supported by practical political behavior.

Another thing which I would like to mention is the public support for NATO which now goes up to 67 percent, and has been acquired through a long period of time. It took us some 10 years to reach this level, which I think makes it more reliable and steady.

Our regional policy is one of the strongest arguments we offer in favor of our candidature. We have excellent relations with all our neighbors, and we succeeded in remaining an island of peace and tranquility in a troubled period of 10 years in the 90s.

Here I will, of course, mention the famous four country format, but I think my Romanian friend and colleague would also speak of the importance of having this Bulgaria-Romania-Greece-Turkey format as a regional effort in enlarging NATO.

Just very briefly about a few domestic issues. Number one, Bulgaria has succeeded in guaranteeing domestic stability and continuity in foreign policy and security matters. The progress report

on Bulgaria's MAP participation is positive. We have been assessed very favorably in Brussels only last week. As to EU, negotiations are progressing at an accelerated pace. We have closed 17 chapters and we have position papers adopted in all the remaining ones. We expect to conclude the negotiations by the end of 2003.

With the military reform, we have also progressed according to the requirements. We have a military budget of 3.4 percent this year. We will decommission the SKUD, Frog 7 and the SS-23 missiles by the latest in October 2002.

Major army and force equipment holdings will be reduced by a further 30 to 40 percent beyond the reductions that were planned earlier, which means that we are taking expeditious measures to get rid of obsolete equipment and weapons.

The army has been downsized by half, from 120,000 to 60,000, to become 45,000. We have started in a shift in the army structure to improve particularly the ratio between officers and NCOs.

One last issue which I believe is extremely important, and this is the ethnic issue. I am happy to say that we enjoy ethnic tolerance in the country. We have no nationalist parties. Now, when there is a surge of anti-semitic waves throughout Europe, we have not had any. We would rather remind everybody of the years of the Holocaust when Bulgaria saved its 50,000 Jews and not a single one was deported to the gas chambers.

We have an ethnic party, the party of the Bulgarian Turks, which is now in government. It is the junior coalition partner in government. It has cabinet ministers and senior officials in the administration.

We have a problem with the Roma, which is, I think, a broadly shared problem. It is mostly social. It is related to education, training, but there are measures which are being taken by the government and if some one of the distinguished representatives would like to know more, in an answer to question I might give more details. But the awareness of the political leadership of the Roma issue is there.

Corruption and organized crime. Yes, we know, we have to cope with corruption and organized crime. Again, I am prepared to answer any question regarding the action that has been taken both in that field and in the efforts to increase the efficiency of the judicial system, which we also need.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ambassador Poptodorova follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HER EXCELLENCY ELENA POPTODOROVA, AMBASSADOR OF BULGARIA

Mr. Chairman, Member of the Committee, Fellow Ambassadors and Guests:

Let me first say what a privilege it is to be here and on behalf of the ten countries now a part of the Vilnius group to give a short overview of why NATO enlargement matters and the relevance of this coalition of aspiring nations. After the overview, I will speak specifically about my country, Bulgaria, and then each Ambassador will do the same.

It is only thirteen years since the fall of the Berlin Wall—a remarkably short period of time for democracy to take hold. Yet the fabric of democratic values is as strongly interwoven in the consciousness of our peoples as the medieval tapestries that adorn our museum walls. The citizenry of Central and Eastern Europe longed to be free and have made tremendous strides since the fall of Communism in embedding the necessary framework and infrastructures to guarantee the irrevocability of democratic institutions. And it has not been easy. It has required hard work and

tough choices—for all of us. It has meant governments rising and falling due to raising expectations and then falling due to not meeting expectations. But it has also shown that democracy works. We can have smooth transitions of government. We can have free exchange of ideas. We can have a healthy multi-party system with a strong opposition.

Our beacon for freedom, independence and democracy has always been the United States. You have long been the source of inspiration and vision for all of us in Central and Eastern Europe. During the years of oppression millions of our citizens came to the shores of the U.S. to seek a better life. Today more than 30 million Americans with roots in Central and Eastern Europe have become a successful part of the great American melting pot. They have built a better life here, but are working alongside us to help embed these principles in their ancestral homes. They are a source of inspiration and experience to help us move at an exponential pace as we enter the 21st century.

The integration of our countries into European and Euro-Atlantic institutions is critical to our future. Our hard work in all areas ranging from military reform to economic reforms, from structural changes to legislative and regulatory frameworks will continue because it is the right thing for each of our individual countries. But recognition that we are moving on the right path, that we are becoming ready, that we add value, that we are like you and would be welcome in the Alliance of freedom and security, the most successful security Alliance in the 20th century, reaffirms to our people, both young and old that we walk down the path of irrevocability. That democracy, freedom and independence and the values and responsibilities they represent are the only ones our children and grandchildren will ever know.

We are a part of Europe representing more than 60 million people. We believe as your President stated in Warsaw that we should all be striving to see how much we can do, not how little. From the Baltic to the Black Sea we are here because we are preparing to take our place as part of a Europe whole and free. This is true for more than enlargement. We share your values, your ideals, and we are taking our responsibilities seriously to build a better world based on these values.

At the Washington NATO Summit in 1999, the 50th anniversary of the Alliance, a communiqué was issued which named nine countries aspiring to NATO membership and set out a process known as MAP—the Membership Action Plan. The map created a set of criteria both political and military. It gave us a roadmap and a framework to demonstrate our commitment in concrete terms. The last round of enlargement we believe was very successful and was the predicate for what we hope will be a very robust enlargement in Prague, but it also left many process questions which the map has helped to clarify.

In May, 2000 the foreign ministers of these countries met in Vilnius Lithuania for the first time to demonstrate their solidarity and commitment to the creation of a Europe whole and free in an alliance with Europe, the United States and Canada as the foundation for stability and security in the 21st century. And so was born the Vilnius group. We all understood that by working together, by evidencing through concrete deeds our actions as allies, we would help build the foundation for a stronger, safer world. We know that the whole was much greater than the sum of the parts.

At first there was skepticism, particularly in Europe. But our governments persisted. Our defense ministers met in Sofia in October, 2000; our foreign ministers again in Brussels in December, 2000 and in Bled Slovenia in April, 2001; our prime ministers in Bratislava in May, 2001 where they heard a visionary speech from President Havel; our foreign ministers in Tallinn in July, 2001; our presidents in Sofia in October, 2001, the first gathering of heads of state post 9/11; our foreign ministers in Skopje, Macedonia in March, 2002; and then our prime ministers met again in Bucharest at the end of March, 2002, they heard from President Kwasniewski of Poland, Prime Minister Ecevit of Turkey, Prime Minister Zeman of the Czech Republic and Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage; all of whom spoke about the importance of enlargement.

The NATO Parliamentary Assembly meets in Sofia (my capitol) at the end of this month. I would encourage all of you to come to Bulgaria and meet with other Parliamentarians from not only the Vilnius countries, but throughout Europe. I would also encourage all of you to come to Riga on July 5–6 where the V–10 prime ministers and Baltic presidents will be celebrating freedom and democracy in the final V–10 summit before Prague in November.

The level of bi-lateral, regional and multi-lateral cooperation has exponentially increased—be it the three Baltic countries in defense areas including procurement, Slovakia with its Visegrad partners, Slovenia as a model of economic success, or the relationships among Southern European countries, Bulgaria, Romania, Greece and

Turkey, Albania and Macedonia. The inclusion of Croatia in the V-10 and the map has helped them speed the process of necessary reforms.

We have all contributed to NATO led missions in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo. We have all volunteered to provide troops, airspace, airfields and whatever support we could to the U.S. in the war against terrorism. We have already acted like NATO allies because we feel we can and do make an important contribution to the community of values to which we belong.

We add value to the Alliance both militarily and politically. Be it air surveillance in the Baltics or mountain troops of Romania, the expertise in demining in Slovenia, or the airfields in Southeastern Europe, we add to the strength and vitality of NATO. Our invitation to join NATO will solidify a core alliance of those whose trust and credibility can be counted on. We will not just be new allies, we will be part of a stronger, more effective, new Alliance capable of responding to the entire range of modern threats.

With that overview in mind let me turn to Bulgaria and outline our progress in a variety of areas.

Mr. GALLEGLY. Thank you, Madam Ambassador.

Representing Albania, we are honored to have Ambassador Tarifa. Mr. Ambassador.

STATEMENT OF HIS EXCELLENCY FATOS TARIFA, AMBASSADOR OF ALBANIA

Ambassador TARIFA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee.

I am honored to be here today, along with my fellow Ambassadors, representing the Vilnius group, to testify before your Committee on Albania's readiness to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

It was not too long ago that some maps of Europe left Albania blank, as though it was a non-country, an empty space, a country with no name. In many ways, those maps were accurate, for as far as Europe and the west were concerned, Albania was a blank. It was a closed country with a "no visitor" sign hung out for all to see.

Well, those days are long gone, I am happy to say, because today Albania is a well recognized place, a country on the move, anxious to be fully integrated into the democratic family of nations.

Despite a difficult past and tremendous suffering under communism, as well as a few painful years of transition, Albania has come a very long way in a very short amount of time. It has made impressive steps forward in carrying out democratic, social and economic reform. Slowly but steadily, Albania is becoming a viable democracy and a stabilizing factor in the region of Southeast Europe.

Albania has made its historical choice: We are a part of Europe and we want to join its institutions. Today, I shall discuss why Albania should be considered favorably for membership and what benefits the alliance will reap by inviting Albania to join its ranks.

First, I would emphasize that Albania was the first postcommunist country to apply for NATO membership back in 1992, and among the first emerging democracies to join the Partnership for Peace initiative in 1994. In the past 8 to 10 years, Albania has indeed acted as de facto ally of NATO. Without the binding force of a treaty commitment, Albania has taken part actively in all of its missions in the region.

It has already proven its usefulness in the U.S. and NATO campaigns in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo. In 1995, Albania welcomed U.S. unmanned planes to be stationed in its territory, pro-

viding a valuable contribution to NATO's war against genocide in Bosnia.

In 1999, Albania, a small country with a population of 3.5 million people, took in and cared for more than half a million Kosovar refugees that had been forced out of their homes by Slobodan Milosevic and also became the base where NATO helicopters were stationed.

Second, since the Washington Summit in May 1999, Albania has taken on a number of far-reaching reforms. The Membership Action Plan has put Albania on the road to fulfill its goal of becoming a member of the alliance. Albania hopes to contribute its light infantry and special forces to the defense of the alliance. Like you, we are reforming, modernizing and adopting our military to be a professional, flexible force, fully interoperable with NATO. Based on U.S. recommendations, Albania has conducted the most far-reaching structural reforms in the history of its armed forces.

Third, Albania's geographical position supports the implementation of NATO's new Strategic Concept agreed to at the Washington Summit. In cooperation with its neighboring states, Italy and Greece—both members of the alliance—Albania's membership in NATO naturally expands the alliance on its southeast wing, building another bridge that will strengthen the links between the western part of Europe with the triangle that lays eastward; from the Adriatic, to the Baltic and the Black Seas, to finally realize the vision of Europe that is whole and free.

Fourth, Albania and the other aspirant countries' membership in NATO further enhance the alliance's ability to meet the challenge of terrorism. The Republic of Albania has offered the United States and its allies access and use of its territory, airspace, airfields and port facilities both for their military operations and peacekeeping missions in Bosnia and Kosovo and for the war on terrorism. Albania has committed its intelligence assets, has frozen financial assets linked to criminals, and has troops on call to support the anti-terror campaign led by the United States.

We share the view that terrorism and organized crimes are closely linked. As a result, the Albanian government maintains a tough stance against trans-border crime and the illegal trafficking of human beings. Recent efforts by the Albanian government have met with notable success in dismantling despicable human and drug trafficking networks. The war against trafficking in women is a war we will win.

Albania's eventual inclusion in NATO along with other Balkan countries would further strengthen the European barriers against criminal and terrorist activities flowing the instability in the Middle East and Central Asia.

Fifth, support of public opinion for Albania's members in NATO is strong. Since 1992 and recently polls have shown that 90 to 95 percent of the population of Albania support its members in the alliance. This holds true for all the political parties in Albania.

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee. The leadership of Hungary said, in the first round of NATO expansion,

"If you cannot chose us at Madrid, please choose our friends in Prague and Warsaw. They will be fine allies."

Today, Albania hopes that an invitation will be extended to us in Prague. Albania today is here as a member of the Vilnius group. If we are not invited in Prague, the Congress should accept our Vilnius brothers. They too will be fine allies. Any success for any democracy is a success and inspiration for all our democracies.

And, Mr. Chairman, by way of conclusion, I would like to say that Albania's goal to join NATO is no sudden discovery; neither is it an overnight inspiration. It is the result of a continuing struggle to bring Albanian civil society into the European mainstream. We are not helpless before that task or hopeless of its success. Our goal is fundamental and irreversible. We share with President Bush the view that we live in a community of shared values. My country is committed to these values, and that is not just a phrase; that is our will.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ambassador Tarifa follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HIS EXCELLENCY FATOS TARIFA, AMBASSADOR OF ALBANIA

Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee:

I am honored to be here today, along with my fellow ambassadors representing the Vilnius group, to testify before your Committee on Albania's readiness to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

It was not too long ago that some maps of Europe left Albania blank, as though it were a non country, an empty space, a country with no name. In many ways those maps were accurate, for as far as Europe and the west were concerned, Albania was a blank. It was a closed country with a "no visitors" sign hung out for all to see. Well, those days are long gone, I am happy to say, because today Albania is a well recognized place, a country on the move, anxious to be fully integrated into the democratic family of nations.

Despite a difficult past and tremendous suffering under communism, as well as a few painful years of transition, Albania has come a very long way in a very short amount of time. It has made impressive steps forward in carrying out democratic, social and economic reform. Slowly but steadily, Albania is becoming a viable democracy and a stabilizing factor in the region of Southeast Europe.

Albania has made its historic choice: we are a part of Europe and we will join Europe's institutions. There are many viewpoints from which the issues of Albania's membership in NATO can be argued. Some are primarily principal. Some are primarily practical. One should, I believe, strive for a balance of both. Since the subjects that can be covered in a statement like this are limited, today I shall discuss why Albania should be considered favorably for NATO membership and what benefits the Alliance will reap by inviting Albania to join its ranks?

First, I would emphasize that Albania was the first postcommunist country to formally apply for NATO membership back in 1992 and among the first emerging democracies to join the *Partnership for Peace* (PfP) initiative in 1994. In the past eight to ten years, Albania has indeed acted as *de facto* ally of NATO. Without the binding force of a treaty commitment, Albania has taken part actively in all of its missions in the region. It has already proven *its usefulness* in the US and NATO campaigns in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosova. In 1995 Albania welcomed US unmanned planes to be stationed in its military basis, providing a valuable contribution to the US and NATO's war against genocide in Bosnia. And in 1999 Albania, a small country with a population of three and a half million people took in and cared for more than half a million Kosovar refugees that had been forced out of their homes by Slobodan Milosevic and also became the base where NATO helicopters were stationed.

Second, since the Washington Summit in 1999, Albania has taken on a number of far-reaching reforms. The *Membership Action Plan* has put Albania on the road to fulfill its goal of becoming a member of the Alliance. Albania hopes to contribute its *light infantry and special forces* to the defense of the Alliance. Like you, we are reforming, modernizing and adapting our military to be a professional, flexible force, fully inter-operable with NATO. Based on US recommendations Albania is conducting the most far-reaching structural reforms in the history of its military.

Third, Albania's *geographical position* supports the implementation of NATO's new Strategic Concept agreed to at the Washington Summit. In co-operation with

its neighboring states, Italy and Greece?both members of the Alliance?Albania's membership in NATO would naturally expand the Alliance on its southeast wing, building another bridge that will strengthen the links between the western part of Europe with the triangle that lays eastward: from the Adriatic, to the Black and the Baltic Seas, to finally realize the vision of a Europe that is whole and free.

NATO's southern dimension will not be complete without its Adriatic flank. Albania's membership in NATO would give the Alliance full control over and access to and from the Adriatic Sea on both sides of the Otranto Canal. It is worth to remember that it was precisely on the Albanian coastal town of Vlora, just 70 miles away from Italy, where the Soviets had their westernmost submarine base a few decades ago, from which, as Khrushchev believed, they could scan the whole of Europe.

Forth, Albania's and other Balkan nations' membership in NATO will further *enhance the Alliance's ability to meet the challenge of terrorism*. The Republic of Albania has offered the United States and its NATO allies access and use of its territory, airspace, airfields and port facilities both for their military operations and peace-keeping missions in Bosnia and Kosova and for the war on terrorism. Albania has committed its intelligence assets, has frozen financial assets linked to criminals, and has troops on call to support the anti-terror campaign led by the United States.

We share the view that terrorism and organized crime are closely linked. As a result, the Albanian government maintains a tough stance against trans-border crime and the illegal trafficking of human beings. Recent efforts by the Albanian government have met with notable success in dismantling despicable human and drug trafficking networks. The war against the trafficking in women is a war we will win. Albania's eventual inclusion in NATO along with other Balkan countries would further strengthen the European barriers against criminal and terrorist activities flowing from the instability in the Middle East and Central Asia. Italian and Greek governments already report that over the past year and recently, illegal trafficking from Albania to these neighboring countries has decreased by nearly 60 percent.

Fifth, support of public opinion for Albania's membership in NATO is strong. Since 1992 and recently polls have shown that 90 to 95 percent of the population of Albania support its membership in the Alliance. This holds true for the support given to NATO membership by all political parties in Albania. If there is one issue on which there is full agreement across the entire political spectrum, from left to right, this is Albania's membership in the Alliance.

I cannot let this opportunity pass without saying that the overwhelming majority of Albanians view inclusion in NATO as necessary to secure their country's future. This central agreement denotes an underlying willingness to respect general democratic values and standards, despite the burdens communism and other forms of authoritarian rule have placed on our democracy. The hope of eventual inclusion in NATO and the EU has become one of the strongest incentives for democratic reform in Albania today.

I do not at all underrate the difficulties and the uncertainties and I am too much of a realist to believe that all the problems in my country will be solved in a day. Obstacles and challenges remain in Albania as they do remain in other countries as well. But all the evidence available to us indicates that progress in Albania is real, considerable, and encouraging. Therefore I have the utmost confidence that the prospects for its future are bright.

Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee,

The leadership of Hungary said, in the first round of NATO expansion, "If you cannot choose us at Madrid, please choose our friends in Prague and Warsaw. They will be fine allies." Albania, like the other members of the Vilnius group, is hopeful that an invitation will be extended to her government to join NATO at the Prague Summit. If we are not invited in Prague, the Congress should accept our Vilnius brothers. They, too, will be fine allies. In our judgment, any success for any democracy is a success and inspiration for all democracies.

Mr. Chairman,

Albania's goal to join NATO is no sudden discovery; neither is it an overnight inspiration. It is the result of a continuing struggle to bring Albanian civic society into the European mainstream. We are not helpless before that task or hopeless of its success. Our goal is fundamental and irreversible. We share with President Bush the view that we live in a community of shared values. My country is committed to these values. And that is not just a phrase; that is our will.

Mr. GALLEGLY. Thank you, Mr. Ambassador.
Representing Croatia, Ambassador Grdešić.

Ambassador GRDEŠIĆ. Grdešić, very good, Mr. Chairman. A lot of times I have a hard time pronouncing you too, so do not worry.
Mr. GALLEGLY. Thank you. Welcome.

**STATEMENT OF HIS EXCELLENCY IVAN GRDEŠIĆ,
AMBASSADOR OF CROATIA**

Ambassador GRDEŠIĆ. Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee. It is my honor to have the opportunity to present to you the Croatian views on the enlargement of NATO. Croatia sincerely believes that all NATO aspirant countries frame in the Vilnius group could contribute significantly to the fulfillment of our shared vision of democratic, prosperous and united Europe.

Let me begin this testimony by presenting a short overview of Croatian achievements in the last decade, a period of constitution of the state and consolidation of Croatian democracy.

The electoral victory of the coalition of political parties in Croatia in January of 2000 was based on a program that advocated inclusion in the Euro-Atlantic associations, as well as strengthening regional cooperation. In the past 2 years, the coalition government has brought the country in the World Trade Organization, The European Free Trade Association, and Partnership for Peace. We have signed the Stabilization and Association Agreement with the European Union, and participate actively in the Stability Pact.

Thus Croatia redefined significantly its international position and confirmed itself as a real contributor of security and stability in the region.

For the last decade, the Croatian government has managed to maintain the country's macroeconomic stability. The Croatian currency remains stable, the inflation rate has stayed below 5 percent, and foreign debt is below 55 percent of the GDP. Actual foreign currency reserves reach one-third of the GDP, and it is \$4,700.

As a newly independent state, Croatia did not have the burden of the communist style army, but rather established its armed forces modeled on NATO principles. Faced with the Communist Yugoslav army aggression the early 1990s, Croatia demonstrated its military and strategic capabilities to defend itself and win the war. Several hundred military officers have already been trained in American and other Western military schools and academies. For the last decade, Croatia has provided logistical support to the United Nations, United States and NATO missions in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo. Croatia is signator of Status of Forces Agreement.

A number of joint military exercises and training with American troops, including the U.S. Marine Corps, took place in Croatia. The recently passed bill by the Croatian parliament, Bill of Defense and National Security Strategy, will accelerate planned military reforms. The government assigns 2 percent of GDP for defense today. The overwhelming majority of the population supports Croatia's NATO membership. And all parliamentary parties share NATO membership as a country's strategic goal.

In the aftermath of September 11, Croatia demonstrated its commitment to act as a de facto ally of the United States, defending the values shared by the democratic world. The threat of global insecurity that emerged after September 11 has taught it clearly that

it is necessary to expand the institutional framework of mutual cooperation. All NATO aspirant countries expect to contribute and to participate in the process of building a safe, free and democratic Europe. There is no place for new division lines in Europe.

Croatia welcomes the approach that would stimulate and award the individual performances of every aspirant. All countries that follow the path of irreversible democracy and commitment to share the common values of freedom have the potential to contribute to the regional and global stability.

Croatia is aware that membership is conditioned by strict criteria which bring additional costs and responsibilities. An admission to the Membership Action Plan, which we expect to be approved at the NATO ministerial meeting in May of this year, would allow Croatia to advance preparations for alliance and be recognized as a credible candidate for the post-Prague round of enlargement.

In the period after the Prague Summit, Croatia will be strongly committed to continue to work closely with NATO, invited countries, and all NATO candidates, further fostering the Vilnius process. Croatia firmly believes that the United States will stay committed to a NATO open-door policy and encourage the strengthening of institutional links with all countries that share the common vision of security, cooperation, and solidarity as the principles of the North Atlantic Alliance.

Let me conclude with an answer to the question: What can Croatia contribute to NATO?

Croatia is ready to defend our common values; has a strong army with a real war experience, and readiness to participate with other members of the alliance in the peacekeeping missions worldwide. Croatia will bring the Adriatic dimension into NATO, strengthening the south wing of the alliance. Croatia considers its NATO membership as the most efficient investment in the permanent stability and prosperity of Southeastern Europe.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Members.

[The prepared statement of Ambassador Grdešić follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HIS EXCELLENCY IVAN GRDEŠIĆ, AMBASSADOR OF CROATIA

CROATIA

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee. It is my honor to have the opportunity to present to you the Croatian views on the enlargement of NATO. Croatia sincerely believes that all NATO aspirant countries framed in the Vilnius group could contribute significantly to the fulfilment of our shared vision of a democratic, prosperous, and undivided Europe.

Let me begin this testimony by presenting a short overview of the Croatian achievements in the last decade, a period of constitution of the state and consolidation of Croatian democracy. The electoral victory of the coalition of political parties in Croatia in January 2000 was based on a program that advocated inclusion in the euro-atlantic associations, as well as the strengthening regional cooperation. In the past two years, the Coalition Government has brought the country into the World Trade Organization (WTO), the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), and the Partnership for Peace. It signed the Stabilization and Association Agreement with the European Union, and participate actively in the Stability Pact.

Thus Croatia redefined significantly its international position and confirmed itself as a real contributor of security and stability in the region. For the last decade, the Croatian government has managed to maintain the country's macroeconomic stability. The Croatian currency remains stable, inflation rate has stayed below 5 percent, and the foreign debt below 55 percent of the GDP. Actual foreign currency reserves reach one third of the GDP. The GDP per capita is \$ 4,700.

As a newly independent state, Croatia did not have the burden of the Communist style army, but rather established its armed forces modeled on NATO principles. Faced with Communist Yugoslav army aggression in the early 1990s, Croatia demonstrated its military and strategic capabilities to defend itself and win the war. Several hundred military officers have been trained already in American and other Western military schools and academies. For the last decade, Croatia has provided logistical support to the United Nations, United States and NATO missions in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo. Croatia is a signatory of the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) agreement. A number of joint military exercises and trainings with American troops, including U.S. Marine Corps, took place in Croatia. The recently passed Bill of Defense and National Security Strategy will accelerate planned military reforms. The government assigns 2 percent of the GDP for defense. The overwhelming majority of the population supports Croatia's NATO membership. All parliamentary parties share NATO membership as the country's strategic goal.

In the aftermath of September 11, Croatia demonstrated its commitment to act as a *de facto* ally of the United States, defending the values shared by the democratic world. The threat of global insecurity that emerged after September 11, has taught us clearly that it is necessary to expand the institutional framework of mutual cooperation. All NATO aspirant countries expect to contribute and participate in the process of building a safe, free and democratic Europe. There is no place for new division lines in Europe.

Croatia welcomes the approach that would stimulate and award the individual performances of every NATO aspirant. All countries that follow the path of irreversible democracy and commitment to share the common values of freedom have the potential to contribute to the regional and global stability. Croatia is aware that NATO membership is conditioned by strict criteria which bring additional costs and responsibilities. An admission to the Membership Action Plan (MAP), which we expect to be approved at the Reykjavik NATO Ministerial Meeting in May 2002, would allow Croatia to advance preparations for the Alliance and be recognized as a credible candidate for the post-Prague round of enlargement. In the period after the Prague summit, Croatia will be strongly committed to continue to work closely with NATO, invited countries, and all NATO candidates, further fostering the Vilnius process. Croatia firmly believes that the United States will stay committed to a NATO open-door policy and encourage the strengthening of institutional links with all countries that share the common vision of security, cooperation, and solidarity as the principles of the North Atlantic Alliance.

Let me conclude with an answer to the question: What can Croatia contribute to NATO? Croatia is ready to defend our common values. Croatia has a strong army with real war experience and readiness to participate with other members of the Alliance in the peace keeping missions world-wide. Croatia would bring the Adriatic dimension into NATO, strengthening the south wing of the Alliance. Croatia considers its NATO membership as the most efficient investment in the permanent stability and prosperity of South Eastern Europe.

Thank you Mr. Chairman,

Mr. GALLEGLY. Thank you, Mr. Ambassador.
Representing Estonia, The Honorable Ambassador Jurgenson.

STATEMENT OF HIS EXCELLENCY SVEN JURGENSON, AMBASSADOR OF ESTONIA

Ambassador JURGENSON. Mr. Chairman and distinguished Members of the Committee.

First, let me thank you all to give us this opportunity to represent our own countries and testify on an issue that is of an extreme importance to the future of all of our countries.

Mr. Chairman, let me remind you what President Bush said in June last year in Warsaw, and I quote,

"We should not calculate how little we can get away with, but how much we can do to advance the cause of freedom."

This is also a slogan for our country. I think also what we have to ask ourselves is how much we can do to advance the cause of freedom, how much we can do to prepare ourselves to be the best possible candidates for Prague Summit and beyond.

The last 10½ years, a little more than 10 years of independence for Estonia, we have witnessed an amazing success. We have one of the fastest growing economies in Europe as has the whole region of the Baltic Sea. Heritage Foundation in this year's economic freedom research has ranked Estonia as fourth freest economy in the world, the place shared with the United States.

Just yesterday a Swiss company, IMD, announced its research results on economic competitiveness where Estonia is ranked number 21 in the world. And Transparency International for this year in its economic—in its corruption perception index shows Estonia as having the lowest corruption in Central and Eastern—not only in Central and Eastern Europe, but lower than in many U.N. NATO countries.

We have always and often been named as example of social and ethnic integration. The 50 years of occupation left a number of ethnic Russians living in Estonia, and the efforts that we have done are witnessed by the fact that OSCE mission left Estonia at the end of last year, and Al Gore, then Vice President in 1995, gave also Estonia as an example to the world how to deal with national minorities.

We have also shown continuity of reform when in 1997 European Union decided to invite Estonia as one of the first countries to start negotiations for membership, then one of the reasonings was that we had shown track record of reform. In spite of the fact that we had several different governments, our reform pace and reform direction remained exactly the same.

We have been successful in reforming our military if it is possible to speak about reform on the fact that we started building up our military from 10 years ago. We allocate 2 percent of our GDP to our defense budget, and Membership Action Plan is giving us a great guidance and the best proof that we spend the money cost effectively and put it to the best use.

But at the same time we understand that a lot still has to be done, and we know that there is a saying that a good runner does not stop at the finish, but runs through the finish, and that is what we intend to do. And we realize that NATO does not end in Prague, but there is a new beginning in Prague.

We are continuing our cooperation with the Baltic states and Nordic countries. We just last week got an invitation to join German, Danish and Polish brigade, joint brigade, together with our friends from Latvia and Lithuania.

The support to allocating 2 percent of GDP is very high in Estonia, and that is the proof that it is going to continue well beyond Prague.

The other important issue that we still have to face and that is going to continue for a very long time is to continue the integration. What we have been able to create is friendly atmosphere and there has not been a single case of ethnic violence in Estonia for the last 10 years. But still it is going to be a very long process that we are doing in cooperation with the United States, European Union and OSCE.

We are trying to actively engage our neighbors, big neighbors in the east, and just yesterday the Chairman of the Russian State Dumas Affairs Committee, Dmitri Rocozin was in Estonia, and he

witnessed that Estonian/Russian relations are really going into the positive direction and becoming more and more constructive.

We have always shared the values that United States and NATO represent, and during the Soviet occupation got a lot of aspiration and encouragement from the non-recognition of the forceful incorporation of the Baltic states into the Soviet Union of the United States of that time. And therefore I can assure you if Estonia would have been free in 1949, we would have been one of the founding members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

Thank you.

Mr. GILMAN. Thank you, Mr. Ambassador.

We have been called to the Floor for a vote, but we will continue right through. Our Chairman has gone over to vote and I will preside until he gets back, and then he will take over again.

Ambassador Ronis of Latvia.

STATEMENT OF HIS EXCELLENCY AVIS RONIS, AMBASSADOR OF LATVIA

Ambassador RONIS. Mr. Chairman, Members of Committee, I want to thank you for calling this hearing and for inviting all the Ambassadors of candidate countries to present their views on the next round of NATO enlargement.

I also would like to express thanks to the Members of House of Representatives for its support of NATO enlargement over the past decade as well as for your recent overwhelming vote for Gerald Solomon, Freedom Consolidation Act,

The people of Latvia well remember the support of United States Congress during the 50 years of Soviet occupation. Latvia as the euro statehood was sustained these many years by the United States policy of nonrecognition and many congressional resolutions supporting the captive nations.

Today our nations are free. We are here with barely 2 months to go before Riga Summit in July, the last gathering of NATO candidate countries before the NATO Prague Summit in November. Decisions at Prague are of monumental importance to our future.

I, and as you can see, the other Ambassadors gathered here representing a new generation in our countries. Our generation looks to the future. We are hard at work every day building the future to make sure we are leaving a different Europe than the one was forced on our parents.

Here in Washington we have opportunity to make a difference. That is why we are here representing our countries. The future we are constructing is one in which the values of a democracy, rule of law and free markets are entrenched. It is only in such future that we see a future for our children and ourselves, where our freedom is irreversible and our potential bonded.

Latvia has made significant progress in the last 12 years since regaining its independence. A new generation has increasingly assumed leadership in our economy, in our political life, and in our military forces. We have been reshaping our country with a resolve that Latvia's economic growth has been one of the most impressive in Europe. We are creating the foundation for our economic prosperity which will be further augmented when we would join Euro-

pean Union in 2004. I hope you come to Riga to see that for yourselves.

Our future also includes Latvia's membership in NATO, an organization that has kept the peace in Europe for over 50 years. If our parents were denied the opportunity to make choice of how they wanted to live and whom they would befriend, then my generation has that freedom to state openly that we want to be part of Europe that is whole, free and stable.

We see NATO membership as an integral part of that future. Latvia has taken seriously its aspiration to join NATO with the introduction of Membership Action Plan process at 1999 NATO Summit in Washington. Latvia has developed over the past several years our annual national program. We will complete the third MAP cycles this year. Latvia's MAP is not just annual planning document, it incorporates eight and 12-year planning cycles. Latvia is committed to long-term development of our military and defense capabilities so that our forces will be interoperable, modern and capable of undertaking Article 5 and other obligations in the alliance.

As an expression of that commitment, Latvia's parliament has passed legislation that will boost spending on defense to 2 percent of GDP by next year, and will maintain that spending through the year 2008. This will ensure the future reforms and procurement plans will be implemented over the medium term. It is worth nothing that 68 percent of Latvian citizens support Latvia's membership in NATO.

For the last several years, in the context of the Partnership for Peace Program, Latvia has joined with Lithuania and Estonia to create peacekeeping force called the Baltic Battalion, which has served regularly in the Western Balkins. Our soldiers have made a real contribution in assisting NATO in its peacekeeping operations there, and will continue to do as well as necessary.

Latvia and our Baltic neighbors, Estonia and Lithuania, have close relations in the military field. We not only have the Baltic Battalion, but also joint Baltic Naval Squadron, joint Baltic Air Surveillance System and joint Baltic Defense College.

We are your allies. The terrible events of September 11 brought home to all of us how vulnerable we are to acts of terrorism. Our response, cementing our laws and introducing procedures, will make it harder for terrorists to find a safe haven in Latvia. And we have offered our military forces to the international coalition in Afghanistan as part of Operation Enduring Freedom.

Latvia has taken serious its obligations to create democratic society based on the rule of law with an open-free market economy. We are committed to creating a modern military that can defend Latvia and that will make a contribution to the North Atlantic Alliance.

Lastly, I would like to invite the Members of Committee to attend the last of the V-10 international conferences that will be held in Riga on 5th and 6th of July. This will be a celebration of NATO enlargement before NATO's summit in Prague in November. You are all cordially invited.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ambassador Ronis follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HIS EXCELLENCY AVIS RONIS, AMBASSADOR OF LATVIA

Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee, I want to thank you for calling this hearing and for inviting all the Ambassadors of the candidate countries to present their views on the next round of NATO enlargement.

My name is Aivis Ronis, I am the Ambassador of the Republic of Latvia.

I would like to express thanks to the members of the House of Representatives for its support of NATO enlargement over the past decade. As well, for your recent overwhelming vote for the Gerald Solomon Freedom Consolidation Act. The people of Latvia well remember the support of the United States Congress during the fifty years of Soviet occupation. Latvia's de jure statehood was sustained these many years by the United States policy of non-recognition, and many Congressional resolutions supporting the "Captive Nations". Today, our nations are free.

We are here with barely two months to go before the Riga Summit in July, the last gathering of the NATO candidate countries before the NATO Prague Summit in November. Decisions at Prague are of monumental importance to our future.

I and, as you can see, the other Ambassadors gathered here represent a new generation in our countries. Our generation looks to the future. We are hard at work, every day, building the future to make sure we live in a different Europe than the one forced on our parents. Here in Washington, we have the opportunity to make a difference; that is why we are here representing our countries. The future we are constructing is one in which the values of democracy, rule of law and free markets are entrenched. It is only in such a future that we see a future for our children and ourselves, where our freedom is irreversible and our potential unbounded.

Latvia has made significant progress in the last 12 years since regaining its independence. A new generation has increasingly assumed leadership in our economy, in our political life and in our military forces. We have been reshaping our country, with the result that Latvia's economic growth has been one of the most impressive in Europe. We are creating the foundations for our economic prosperity, which will be further augmented when we join the European Union in 2004. I hope you come to Riga to see for yourselves.

Our future also includes Latvia's membership in NATO, an organization that has kept the peace in Europe for over fifty years. If our parents were denied the opportunity to make a choice of how they wanted to live and whom they would befriend, then my generation has that freedom to state openly and unequivocally that we want to be part of a Europe that is whole, free and stable. We see NATO membership as an integral part of that future.

Latvia has taken seriously its aspiration to join NATO. With the introduction of the Membership Action Plan (MAP) process at the 1999 NATO Summit in Washington, Latvia has developed over the past several years our Annual National Program. We will complete the third MAP cycle this year. Latvia's MAP is not just an annual planning document; it incorporates 8 and 12 year planning cycles. Latvia is committed to the long-term development of our military and defense capabilities, so that our forces will be interoperable, modern and capable of undertaking Article 5 and other obligations in the Alliance.

As an expression of that commitment Latvia's Parliament has passed legislation that will boost spending on defense to 2% of GDP by next year and will maintain that spending through the year 2008. This will ensure that future reforms and procurement plans will be implemented over the median term. It is worth noting that 68% of Latvia's citizens support Latvia's membership in NATO.

For the last several years, in the context of the Partnership for Peace program, Latvia has joined with Lithuania and Estonia to create a peace-keeping force called the Baltic Battalion which has served regularly in western Balkans. Our soldiers have made a real contribution in assisting NATO in its peace-keeping operations there and will continue to do so as long as necessary. Latvia and our Baltic neighbors, Estonia and Lithuania, have close relations in the military field; we not only have the Baltic Battalion, but also a joint Baltic naval squadron, a joint Baltic air surveillance system and a joint Baltic defense college.

We are your allies. The terrible events of September 11 brought home to all of us how vulnerable we all are to acts of terrorism. In response, we strengthened our laws and introduced procedures that will make it harder for terrorists to find a safe haven in Latvia, and we have offered our military forces to the international coalition in Afghanistan as part of "Operation Enduring Freedom".

Latvia has taken seriously its obligations to create a democratic society based on the rule of law, with an open free market economy. We are committed to creating a modern military that can defend Latvia and that will make a contribution to the North Atlantic Alliance.

Lastly, I would like to invite the members of the committee to attend the last of the V-10 international conferences that will be held in Riga on 5-6 July. This will be a celebration of NATO enlargement before the NATO Summit in Prague in November. You are all cordially invited to attend.

Thank You.

Mr. GILMAN. Thank you, Mr. Ambassador.
Ambassador Dimotrov of Macedonia.

**STATEMENT OF HIS EXCELLENCY NIKOLA DIMOTROV,
AMBASSADOR OF MACEDONIA**

Ambassador DIMOTROV. Mr. Chairman, thank you very much, distinguished Members of the Committee. It is my privilege and honor to address you and present the case of Macedonia in the context of NATO enlargement.

I would like to on behalf of my nation to thank you for this opportunity to speak here, my fellow Ambassadors, ladies and gentlemen.

Probably Macedonia especially in the last couple of years was mentioned more in the context of NATO in Macedonia than Macedonia in NATO. I am here today to tell you that we are firmly determined to change this, and we are firmly determined to see the other way around, to see Macedonia in NATO.

This is going to be very difficult; but it was also very difficult to face three or four embargoes in the last decade, to face three or four wars on our borders on the territory of the former Yugoslavia, to have disputes with neighbors, and to rebuild an army and police force from nothing, from zero.

That is why I firmly believe that we are going to see Macedonia in NATO, and I am going to—when I finish my presentation, ask you to support invitation from Macedonia press.

I am going to start, and I am going to try to be very brief on this given the time, and I am going to try to be very clear.

Now, answering the question: Why Macedonia would like to be a NATO member?

First of all, Macedonia is part of Europe. We would like to see the dream Europe: Whole and free implemented, and we share the common values with the United States. We were grateful for the United States in this decade for helping us to achieve the rule of law, to achieve full aspect of funeral rights and minority rights, to achieve ethnic harmony and tolerance, and to achieve free market economy.

We see the future of Europe as part of Euro-Atlantic relationship, not only because it is basically the only game in town, but because it supports democracy, it supports human rights, it supports free markets, and as the President said after the events of September 11th,

“In respect of this event and after this event, we are all Americans.”

So in a way the changing world we are all witnesses, we see NATO as, first of all, the strongest military alliance in the world, but also a very firm political brotherhood that supports democracy, human rights, rule of law, and free markets.

We also want to be a part of NATO because we believe that that will bring stability to Macedonia, and we believe that given the re-

cent events there can be no real stability in the Balkins without Macedonia as a heart of it.

The last reason is in a poll made by the International Republican Institute very recently, 2 weeks ago, NATO membership was seen as an issue of similar value which——

Mr. GALLEGLY. Mr. Ambassador, I am going to have to interrupt. We have 2 minutes to get to the Floor. Mr. Gilman will be here in just a moment, so we will declare a recess momentary.

[Whereupon, a recess was taken.]

Mr. GALLEGLY. I apologize for stopping the hearing because we are behind to start with, and I appreciate your indulgence.

Ambassador Dimotrov, I understand you were about to conclude, and so we apologize for the interruption.

Ambassador.

Ambassador DIMOTROV. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, it was a very short recess.

I stopped at the polls. Macedonia regards NATO membership among the three top issues in our nation's agenda. First, the first issue is peace; the second issue NATO membership; and the third issue is fight against corruption. All of these are very interrelated in the awareness of the comments of the Macedonians.

Now, what have we done, what can we do to reach the NATO standards?

We received in relative numbers, taking into account the proportion of the population and the territory, we received the largest number of refugees during the Kosovo campaign back in 1999. We offered our territory, and we made our capitol, Scopia, the key logistic base to support the NATO operation in Kosovo. We provided host nation support and we have agreed on a legal framework to support any future NATO mission in our country.

We are part of SEEBRIG, a common regional military cooperation and peacekeeping force where the United States is an observer, and Italy, Greece and Turkey are members, together with Macedonia, Bulgaria and Albania.

We offered our airspace and our airports after the events of September 11, and we made our national bank and all the banks apply the measures that would prevent and block the funds which might be used for sponsoring terrorism.

We have good neighbor relations with all our neighbors these days. We concluded a free trade agreement with the Republic of Albania. We cooperate very closely with Bulgaria, not only in the environment. Our southern neighbor, Greece, is our biggest investor, and we have very frequent political consultations with Greece. We conclude that it is in our very best interest to have a stable Macedonia because it will affect Greece as well.

We have good relations for Yugoslavia or Serbian Montenegro. There are some problems with the border with Kosovo, and with Kosovo as an entity given that we see the administration starting, commencing with building the democratic institutions there and rule of law, and we are very much interested to see democratic institutions working and functioning properly in Kosovo. That is in our best interests.

Macedonia was described as the last best hope as far as a functional multi-ethnic democracy as possible in the Balkins. Very re-

cently there were articles in Washington Post and Washington Times referring to this phrase. We intend to implement this hope. We intend to justify this hope. It is in your hands mostly whether we will witness a new alliance of division in Europe. It is in your hands whether we are going to see gray zones in Europe. It is in your hands and it is going to be mostly your decision that would affect the destiny of the whole nations. That is why we feel that Prague would be a round with history, and we firmly believe decisions we make on the basis of a long-term policy, on the basis of a long-term and strategic observations because it is going to be a decision that would build the future architecture of Europe.

With all the refugees affected, with all the conduct we demonstrated because of our cooperation with the international community, because of our belief in multi-ethnic relations, we even amended our constitution last year in order to absorb the crisis, avoid a sea of war, another one on the Balkans, and we were successful.

We invested a lot in our future, trusting nature, and that is why we dare to hope that NATO will invest in Macedonia by inviting us to join it this year in Prague.

Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Ambassador Dimotrov follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HIS EXCELLENCY NIKOLA DIMOTROV, AMBASSADOR OF
MACEDONIA

Mr. Chairman, distinguished Members of the Committee, ladies and gentlemen: It is my honor and privilege to present the candidature of the Republic of Macedonia in front of such a distinguished forum. Most of you have probably heard about Macedonia in a different context—NATO in Macedonia. I am here today to convince you that we will change that context and with your support, we will see Macedonia in NATO. That certainly is not an easy task. Equally difficult was to start from scratch in building an army, surviving four wars in the neighborhood, surviving several embargoes against our neighbors, and dealing with the overwhelming consequences of 360,000 refugees (this equals 17% of Macedonia's population).

Macedonia was and still is described as "the last best hope" in Southeastern Europe for a functional, multi-ethnic democracy. It was democracy and tolerance that helped us avoid yet another bloody civil war in what used to be Yugoslavia, and through political solutions, absorb the extremely destructive agenda of those who attacked Macedonia last year.

We proved that with our capacity for goodwill and our maturity we can overcome the most difficult challenges. By answering the questions about why Macedonia wants to become member of NATO, how it can contribute to NATO missions, and what has been done to date to reach the alliance's standards, it will become clear what our expectations are in receiving a membership invitation in the upcoming Prague Summit.

Mr. Chairman, historically and culturally Macedonia has always been a part of Europe and as Europeans, we share the values of the Euro-Atlantic community. Our goals are the same: a united and free Europe.

Bearing in mind the responsibility that we are facing in this historic time of building a new security architecture in Europe, I'd like to emphasize that my country is willing to share the responsibility and the burden of this process, including facing new challenges such as terrorism, organized crime, trafficking in weapons, drugs and people. Active participation of all the aspiring countries, shoulder to shoulder with the existing alliance members, which is indubitably the most effective international mechanism, is the best guarantee for the successful implementation of our goals. I would like to stress that without Macedonia as part of the Alliance, stability in the Balkans is in constant jeopardy since Macedonia is the center of the Balkans.

For us NATO is not just the most powerful military Alliance in the world. We perceive NATO as a genuine guarantee for the realization of democracy, human rights, the rule of law, and free markets. That is to say, NATO is a kind of catalyst for all positive democratic processes which are meant to bring us closer together and

provide long-term stability and well-being in the Euro-Atlantic region. This is a conviction of not only the political parties in Macedonia, but the people of Macedonia as well. According to a recent public opinion survey done by the International Republican Institute, NATO membership is among the three most important issues of the people of Macedonia, along with peace, and fighting corruption.

What best illustrates our desire to reach NATO standards is the perseverance in the implementation of the Membership Action Plan, as well as three annual national programs that were successfully implemented in spite of the conflict in 2001 and the intense demands made on our government and ministry personnel. We have made great efforts to align our legal system to Western standards and we will persevere in these efforts. There are no constitutional obstacles for our future participation in NATO operations, according to article five of the Washington Agreement.

Last year we also adopted a new defense law which will accelerate considerably the army's transformation into a modern, mobile and effective organization. Recently the Macedonian army created a new and sophisticated rapid reaction unit. Based on the SOF Agreement, we have created a complex legal framework for defining and equalizing the status of the NATO forces during their deployment in Macedonia which makes their cooperation with the Macedonian Army, the institutions of the system and the local population much easier.

By fully implementation the framework agreement, all conditions for membership in NATO will have been met, and the most difficult reforms in the economy are already behind us. Macedonia has friendly relations with all its neighbors. Recently, we signed a free trade agreement with Albania. Greece is the biggest investor in Macedonia. Relations with Bulgaria are characterized by cooperation in many fields of mutual interest. After the fall of Milosevic, relations with Yugoslavia immediately improved and continue to improve.

It is easy to illustrate how Macedonia can provide assistance to NATO when one merely looks at Macedonia's partnership with NATO over the last, difficult four years. Unlike all the other countries that offered financial support, weapons and military forces for NATO's operation against Milosevic, Macedonia offered its most valuable asset—its territory. Even though the stakes were high—according to many the survival of Macedonia was brought into question—we offered our territory as a logistics base for the operation, profoundly aware of the fact that, geostrategically, the alliance had no other alternative for stationing their forces before their deployment in Kosovo. Also, proportionally Macedonia received more refugees than any other country in spite of the delicate ethnic balance at home.

Macedonia participated successfully with a select command and military staff in the SEEBRIG, together with other NATO members such as Italy, Greece and Turkey with the United States as an observer.

After the September 11th terrorist attack on the US, the President of Macedonia clearly declared that "after this world tragedy, we are all Americans." Macedonia immediately joined the anti-terrorist coalition and once again offered its air space, including airports for the needs of the coalition. Also, different measures were taken in blocking the bank accounts that were suspected of providing funds for terrorism.

Mr. Chairman and members of her Committee, it depends on you whether there will be new lines of division in Europe. The survival of "gray zones" is in your hands, as well as the destinies of many nations. For these reasons, I dare ask you to take into consideration the long-term consequences and strategic implications, rather than problems of today and the crisis of the week, in making your decision to support Macedonia's entry into NATO.

With all the difficult decisions made during the Kosovo and the Macedonia crisis, starting from refugees to constitutional amendments, Macedonia has risked and invested a lot in its relations and cooperation with NATO. Therefore, I think it is our moral right to ask NATO to invest its trust in Macedonia by sending an invitation to the Prague Summit.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, thank you for your time and attention. I would be willing to answer any questions you may have.

Mr. GALLEGLY. Thank you, Mr. Ambassador.
Representing Romania, Ambassador Ducaru.
Mr. Ambassador. Do you have that turned on?

**STATEMENT OF HIS EXCELLENCY SORIN DUCARU,
AMBASSADOR OF ROMANIA**

Ambassador DUCARU. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and distinguished Members of Congress.

I am indeed extremely honored to have a chance to testify in front of you today and follow my distinguished colleagues, and would like to thank Ambassador Poptodorova for her comprehensive remarks.

I have a longer statement which I would like to leave for the record, and just to pinpoint some of the specific issues relating on the importance of NATO and my country's candidacy.

Mr. GALLEGLY. Without objection, your entire statement will be made a part of the record of the hearing.

Ambassador DUCARU. Thank you.

The first question I wanted to address briefly was why enlargement. We think that enlargement is important for the transatlantic community. We have seen enlargement as a part of the solutions to the new challenges of the new century, and we want part, we want to be part of this solution.

The war on terrorism has proved that more allies are better than fewer allies. We share the values and the principles of the transatlantic community, and we think that bringing into the alliance like-minded countries with stable democratic systems from the Baltics to the Black Sea is a long-term warranty against the spread of the new threats and it will expand stability, democracy and freedom in Central and Eastern Europe leading to the completion of a Europe whole and free.

Second, why we want to join NATO, and I would like to pinpoint that at least for Romanians NATO is not just about sharing the common values and ensuring our security. NATO membership would serve as a validation of my country's return to its Western roots and identity from which it was artificially diverted for more than half a century by the Soviet area.

This is why more than 80 percent of the Romanian public supports NATO membership and why our contribution to NATO's objectives and mission is not just an obligation, but also a matter of pride. This contribution and pride has been reflected in Romanian soldiers' participation in the Gulf War, in Bosnia, Kosovo, and most recently in Afghanistan.

Third, I want to pinpoint the guiding principles of our preparations for NATO membership. And these are, first, performance; second, contribution; and third, solidarity among aspirants.

On performance, I wanted to mention that more than a decade—after more than a decade of transformations we have established a democracy—established democracy and a functioning market economy. This democracy has been tested by three rounds of elections and two democratic transfers of power, having a good record in the field of human rights.

Romania is currently in its third year of economic growth after 1.6 percent growth in 2000 and 5 percent in 2001. April, this month, Standard & Poor's upgraded Romania's ratings for the second time in less than a year.

Romania's military reform is guided by the vision of transformation from a doctrine of territorial defense to flexible and rapidly deployable, self-sustaining and more professional forces. We are focusing on downsizing the army and adopting command structure to NATO standards. We have doubled the amount of resources for soldier in the last years. We have put together a modern system

of acquisition in the army, and we use the robust planning, programming for budgeting, and our defense budget accounts for 2.38 percent in 2000 to be sustained between 2.3 and 2.5 percent for the next 5 years.

We are aware that we still have work to do and problems to overcome. We are mindful of the need to be prepared to assume NATO responsibilities, and in the remaining months before the Prague Summit, we are focused on the MAP and continued progress in military reform, stimulating economic growth, fighting corruption and strengthening the rule of law. These are our priorities.

On the contribution side, I just wanted to mention that in a discussion with a distinguished U.S. senator I was asked a very interesting question. What can NATO candidate countries bring to the alliance that the alliance does not already have?

And I think the response is that, first, we, all the aspirant countries can bring into the alliance the essential elements of our new strategic identity. The Romanian Prime Minister Adrian Nostase pointed out in his speech at SAIS last November, for example, that Romania stands at the border of troubled spots with its troops and territory, and the tenacity to promote democracy and stability.

Furthermore, each of our countries can bring specialized contributions to the alliance and to opening air, land, marketing corridor, sharing intelligence and all the other contributions that have been mentioned are proving that we are willing and able to act as the de facto allies in the United States.

At present, Romania's participation in the international security assistant force in Afghanistan accounts 48 military and one C130 Hercules plane. These troops have been self-deployed in the region. Just yesterday the Romanian parliament approved the deployment of an additional 405 combat troops and 17 nuclear biological and chemical engineers in support of the operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan.

On solidarity, I think one of the most valuable assets we have acquired in our group, and we have this—promoted this both as a group and regionally. And I would just want to mention the cooperation between Romania and Bulgaria in our southern region of Europe as well as the cooperation between Romania, Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey, which has relevance for the Balkin region, for Central Asia and the war against terrorism.

As conclusions, Mr. Chairman, I want to mention that the principle and actions guiding our preparation for NATO membership stem not only from what NATO could bring to us, but also from what we can bring to the alliance. This is why especially after September 11 we decided jointly to act as de facto allies. Our reforms are not done just for the sake of NATO membership. They are part of the internal process of consolidating our democracy, promoting rule of law and creating a functioning and prosperous market economy.

Our preparations are not just aimed at the Prague final exam, but also at bringing value added to the alliance beyond the Prague Summit. And following on the metaphor of my Estonian colleague, I want to highlight the message that my Foreign Minister represented to the administrator earlier this April that

“We are not sprinting toward the finish line in Prague, but to a starting line which will bring us to something much more complex and comprehensive as responsibilities.”

We are thankful for the constant and substantive guidance provided to us by our friend and partners, especially here in the United States: The U.S. Administration, Congress and the think tank community. We are especially grateful to the U.S. House of Representatives for adopting the Freedom Consolidation Act and for the constant openness of the House Members for dialogue with our officials.

We have been encouraged by the message of the two leaders of the Senate, Majority Leader Tom Daschle, and Minority Leader Trent Lott, addressed to the Bucharest Spring of New Allies Conference, and this was,

“NATO enlargement has enjoyed and continues to enjoy bipartisan support in the U.S. Senate. It is an issue that unites Democrats and Republicans.”

Last, I would mention the special symbolism of Prague to our countries. It is a place where in 1916 we were sent an invitation to come with thanks to end the “Prague Spring.” And we declined that invitation. I would like to assure you, Mr. Chairman, that we are doing our utmost to be prepared for this new invitation.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ambassador Ducaru follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HIS EXCELLENCY SORIN DUCARU, AMBASSADOR OF ROMANIA

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Members of Congress,

I am extremely privileged to have the opportunity to talk to you about an issue of high importance for my country: NATO enlargement. It is also a great honor to follow my distinguished colleagues from the NATO candidate countries. I want to thank Ambassador Poptodorova for her comprehensive overview of the NATO enlargement process and for bringing specific emphasis on the importance of NATO enlargement and Romania's candidacy.

WHY IS NATO ENLARGEMENT IMPORTANT FOR THE TRANS-ATLANTIC COMMUNITY?

We see NATO enlargement as part of the solution to the challenges of the new century. We want to be part of this solution. The war on terrorism has proved that more allies are better than fewer allies. Romania shares the values and principles of the Trans-Atlantic community. Bringing into the Alliance like-minded countries, with stable democratic systems, from the Baltic to the Black Sea, is a long-term guarantee against the spread of the new threats; it will expand the area of stability, democracy and freedom throughout Central and Eastern Europe. Our countries want to be part of an Alliance that has been successful and whose enlargement leads to the completion of a Europe whole and free.

WHY DOES ROMANIA WANT TO JOIN NATO?

Along with sharing the common values, principles and objectives of the Alliance, as well as ensuring our national security, NATO membership would serve as a validation of Romania's return to its Western roots and identity, from which it was artificially diverted for more than half a century by the Soviet era. This is why more than 80% of the Romanian public supports NATO membership and why contribution to NATO's objectives and missions is not just an obligation, but also a matter of pride. This contribution and pride have been reflected in Romanian soldiers' participation in the Gulf War and peace-support missions in Somalia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo and most recently in Afghanistan.

THE GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF OUR PREPARATIONS FOR NATO MEMBERSHIP

Mr. Chairman,

Our preparations for membership in the Alliance are based on three main guiding principles: self-performance within the Membership Action Plan, contribution to NATO's objectives and missions, and solidarity with the allies and partners.

a) Performance

After more than a decade of difficult transformations, we have an established democracy and a functional market economy. Our democracy has been tested by three rounds of elections and two democratic transfers of power, having a good record in the field of human rights. On February 24 this year, Allen Kassof, president of the U.S.-based foundation "Project on Ethnic Relations", active in Central and Eastern European countries for more than ten years, acknowledged the high-level cooperation between the current Romanian Government and the party representing the Hungarian minority (UDMR), by naming Romania *"an example for all the countries in the region"* and stating that *"interethnic dialogue and cooperation of such quality and with such good results have no equivalent, at this time, in this region of Europe"*.

Romania is currently in its third year of economic growth, after 1.6% growth in 2000 and 5 % in 2001. On April 19, 2002, Standard & Poor's upgraded Romania's ratings for the second time in less than one year, reflecting, as the agency stated, *"Romania's reduced vulnerability to external pressures, the lasting robust performance of its export sector, and more sustainable private-sector-driven economic growth"*. The Romanian private sector now accounts for 65% of GDP.

Romania's military reform is guided by the vision of transformation-transformation from the doctrine of territorial defense to flexible, rapidly deployable, self-sustainable professional forces, fully interoperable with NATO. We have downsized peacetime force structure by more than half (from 300, 000 in 1989 to 127,000 at present) and adapted our command structure to NATO standards. Qualitative changes occurred in training and equipment of armed forces. We have doubled the amount of resources per soldier, and made the units earmarked for possible Article 5 missions the top priority. The decrease in the number of high-ranking officers and the increase of professional soldiers has resulted in a structural shift in the armed forces. An Air Sovereignty Operational Center (ASOC) pilot program has been initiated and will be linked to the NATO's Center. A modern acquisition system is in place as part of "2002-2005 Defense Planning Directive" and we use a robust Planning, Programming and Budgeting System. The modernization of the armed forces is based upon a military budget of 2.38 % in 2002, to be sustained between 2.3 % and 2.5 % for the next 5 years.

We are aware that we still have work to do and problems to overcome. We are mindful of the need to be fully prepared for assuming the responsibilities of NATO membership. In the remaining months before the Prague Summit, full implementation of our Membership Action Plan (MAP) and continued progress in military reform, further stimulating economic growth, fighting corruption and strengthening rule of law are our priorities.

b) Contribution

In a discussion with a distinguished US Senator, I was asked a very interesting question: "What can NATO candidate countries bring to the Alliance that the Alliance does not already have?" I think that first and foremost, we can bring essential elements of our geo-strategic identity. As the Romanian Prime Minister Adrian Nastase pointed out in a speech at SAIS last November, *"Romania is on the front-line of conflicts in Southeastern Europe, with territory, with troops and with tenacity. The tenacity of pursuing reform and consolidating democracy at home, while promoting regional peace, cooperation and stability."*

Furthermore, each of our countries can bring specialized contributions to the Alliance. Opening air, land and maritime corridors, sharing intelligence, fighting financial sources of terrorism, offering logistic facilities and even troops on the ground are contributions to the war on terrorism we have already made, showing that we are willing and able to act as *"de facto"* allies of the United States and NATO.

Romania was the first among the candidate countries to bring troops on the ground in Afghanistan. We transported the troops there with our airlift capacities. At present, the Romanian participation in the International Security and Assistance Force in Afghanistan accounts for 48 military, one C130 Hercules plane with its own crew. Just yesterday, the Romanian Parliament approved the deployment of additional 405 combat troops and 70 Nuclear, Biological and Chemical engineers in support of the operation "Enduring Freedom" in Afghanistan.

At the recent Donor Conference in Stuttgart (Germany), Romania pledged to help the US and other partners to train the Georgian army. The Black Sea port of Constanta has been established as a gathering point for all the other contributions and for transporting them to Georgia by using the direct ferryboat line that links the seaport of Constanta to the Georgian port of Batumi/Poti.

c) Solidarity

Solidarity among NATO candidate countries is one of the most valuable achievements of the Vilnius Group process. Our presence here, in this format, is an expression of this principle. We understand that we are not in competition between each other, but rather in a competition with ourselves in meeting membership criteria. We have learned to promote solidarity as an entire group as well as regionally. My distinguished Bulgarian colleague has already mentioned the close cooperation and coordination between our two countries, cooperation that has enhanced regional stability and anti-terrorist efforts and promoted a Southern dimension of NATO enlargement.

Romania and Bulgaria constitute a natural bridge linking the central core of NATO with Greece and Turkey. We jointly offered air corridors and logistic facilities to NATO operations during Kosovo war and for the US-led coalition against terrorism. Most recently, in February 2002, we established a new format of cooperation, reuniting Romania, Bulgaria Greece and Turkey, with multiple purposes:

- project stability in the Western Balkans, as well as towards Central Asia and the Middle East;
- enhance cooperation in the war against terrorism and in countering transnational threats;
- strengthening the case for a Southern dimension of NATO enlargement.

CONCLUSIONS

Mr. Chairman,

The principles and actions guiding our preparations for NATO membership stem not only from what NATO could bring to us, but also from what we can bring to the Alliance. That is why, especially after September 11, we decided to jointly act as “de facto” allies. Our reforms are not done just for the sake of NATO membership. They are part of the internal process of consolidating our democracy, promoting rule of law and creating a functioning and prosperous market economy. Our preparations are not just aimed at the Prague “final exam”, but also at bringing value to the Alliance beyond the Prague summit. It is this vision that Romanian Foreign Minister Mircea Geoana laid out for US Administration officials in April this year: *“Romania is not sprinting towards the finishing line in Prague, but to a starting line towards much more complex and comprehensive responsibilities”*.

We are thankful for the constant and substantive guidance provided to us by our friends and partners, especially here in the United States: the US Administration, Congress and the think tank community. We are especially grateful to the US House of Representatives for adopting the Freedom Consolidation Act and for the constant openness of House members for dialogue with our officials. We have been encouraged by the message the two leaders of the Senate, Majority Leader Tom Daschle, and Minority Leader Trent Lott, addressed to the Bucharest “Spring of the New Allies” Conference: *“NATO enlargement has enjoyed and continues to enjoy bipartisan support in the United States Senate. It is an issue that unites Democrats and Republicans”*.

I would like to conclude by stressing the special meaning Prague bears for my country. As President of Romania, Ion Iliescu, mentioned in his February speech at the Woodrow Wilson Center, *“Prague is not only the golden city of Europe. Not only the place of President Havel’s Velvet Revolution. It is a place where in 1968 Romania, along with other Warsaw Pact countries, was sent an invitation to come with tanks in order to end the ‘Prague Spring’. We declined that invitation. This year, the Allies within NATO are preparing for a different kind of invitation, that of defending and promoting the democratic values and of building a Europe, whole and free, by joining NATO”*. I would like to assure you that Romania is doing its utmost to be best prepared to honor *this* invitation.

Thank you.

Mr. GALLEGLY. Thank you, Mr. Ambassador.
Representing the Slovak Republic, Ambassador Butora.
Mr. Ambassador.

**STATEMENT OF HIS EXCELLENCY MARTIN BUTORA,
AMBASSADOR OF SLOVAKIA**

Ambassador BUTORA. Mr. Chairman, distinguished Members of the Committee, ladies and gentlemen.

We have come here today to respond to questions about our aspirations to join NATO and about our contributions to the alliance, and I would like to ask you to include my longer written statement into the record.

Mr. GALLEGLY. Without objection, everyone's statement may be submitted in its entirety for the official record.

Ambassador BUTORA. Thank you.

Meanwhile, let me say a couple of remarks in a broader context. Slovakia wants to join NATO because of her past and perhaps even more because of her future. We are convinced that Slovakia will be a better country as a member state of NATO, that NATO will be a better alliance with Slovakia, and that the United States' interests will be better served with a stronger and bigger NATO that includes Slovakia.

We want to join NATO because we never want to repeat our past. Believe me, each family in Slovakia remembers the horrors of the 20th century when Slovaks underwent two world wars and lived under two dictatorships. We have in our bones an experience of what it means to be attacked, to be occupied, and to be bombed. That is why we were so strongly with you after September 11, why thousands of rank and file Slovaks stood in their deep sorrow and prayers. And that is why our intelligence, our law enforcement institutions and our military offered total and immediate cooperation in the fight against terrorism.

Mr. Chairman, I am here to testify, to be asked, and to respond. Yet for the most of the 20th century we were not asked about our opinion. We were not asked when Hitler in September 1938 pushed for Munich Agreement, which led to the end of Czechoslovakia. We were not asked when Nazis entered our territory to suppress the Slovak National Uprising, one of the largest revolts in the wartime Europe.

After communists took over in 1948, thousands of people were not questioned when they were sent to prisons for fabricated crimes. And obviously, Mr. Chairman, we were not asked when Soviet-led troops invaded our country in August 1968 and crushed an attempt to make socialism more human led by Slovak reformist Alexander Dubcek.

That is why we, the citizens of Slovakia, are today coming with an unambiguous answer. We want a different future for our children.

In the years which have passed from Washington NATO Summit, we have moved ahead. Slovakia has now a functioning market economy and firmly anchored democratic institutions. We amended our constitution in accordance with our integration needs. We have strengthened the independence of our judiciary. Our media are vibrant and free. We moved ahead in decentralization. And we are doing well with our minorities. We are fortunate to have the representatives of the Hungarian minority in the government, and are sensitive to our Jewish minority.

I just returned from Bratislava to watch the preparation of the reopening of the tomb of the famous Rabbi from Bratislava Chatam Sofer together with his mausoleum.

Mr. Chairman, while everyone agrees that both with regard to the capacity of our armed forces and to our strategic position, Slovakia is well suited to become a useful member, I would like to remind you that our commitment to the values shared by the alliance is deeper and persists longer than just the last decade—and goes actually both ways.

Slovak Americans stood side by side their fellow Americans in fight for freedom and peace in Europe in the World War II. One of them, Sergeant Michael Strank, stands for them and for all of us in the Iwo Jima Memorial here in Washington among five other flag raisers. And there are others who have lived to teach us a lesson of friendship and strategic partnership.

I am proud to introduce to you, Mr. Chairman, Mr. George Bobal of Clifton, New Jersey, who is with us here today. [Applause.]

A devoted American patriot and a good Slovak in his heart, George served his country in the 1st Army Corps' Company A 509 Special Forces Unit. Later on, he led Company A 713 Military Police Unit protecting President Harry Truman at the Potsdam Peace Conference. Staff Sergeant Bobal was one of the first soldiers to enter Berlin, and Mr. Chairman, this photograph is a caption of this memorable moment.

Mr. Chairman, Slovakia offers what she can to meet the challenges we face today. Slovak soldiers are operating in East Timor and Eritrea/Ethiopia, in Golan Heights and Cyprus. They are serving in the KFOR joint Czecho-Slovak battalion in Kosovo, and a common Slovak-Czech-Polish brigade is in preparation. I am sure President Rudolf Schuster will also elaborate on this subject while meeting with President George Bush in early June.

Thanks to the intensive modernization of our armed forces aimed at building relatively small, but highly qualified and well trained units, Slovakia is becoming a trustworthy partner, and this chart, Sir, reflects the per capita presentation of the Slovakia's units serving for these peacekeeping purposes.

Let me assure you that our population is aware of these challenges. According to polls, during the past 3 years, the support for Slovakia's membership in NATO has spread to the majority of population and grew beyond 60 percent. This steady growth of public support for NATO has not been achieved by government alone. It is also the work of civil activists. Their participation in the education campaign on NATO has been of vital importance for increasing public understanding of national security issues, and I am confident that in the coming months Slovak civic associations will do their legwork to get out the vote and to boost informed and responsible electoral behavior in the September 2002 elections.

Mr. Chairman, since Washington Summit Slovakia has played an active role in the international community. We have improved our relationships with our neighbors in the Central Europe, helping to restore the spirit of cooperation among Visegrad countries, which strongly support our integration.

From the very beginning, Slovakia has been a dynamic member of the Vilnius group, in particular known as a strong advocate of

solidarity. As many people in this room know, we have been systematically struggling for enhancing the chances of our Baltic friends. We did our best to promote the strategic importance of the southern dimension of enlargement, and we have in our minds and hearts integration horizons for those next in line, like Croatia and others. It is because we are so deeply convinced about the importance of this "coalition of the willing," a coalition prepared to defend freedom, democracy and open society. The creation of such coalition has required not only leadership back home in candidate countries and a coordinated effort of their Embassies here in Washington, but it has needed a determined and visionary American leadership.

Mr. Chairman, let me thank you and the Members of U.S. Congress, the Administration of President Bush, as well as other leading policy makers and devoted supporters such as U.S. Committee on NATO for this involvement.

Dear friends, we are living in unique times. In a few months, the map of Europe, and thus the map of the world will be redrawn. As this rendezvous with history is approaching, I am thinking of many participants and witnesses on this road.

I am thinking of people of integrity who despite very difficult circumstances did not betray their souls and resisted evil. I am thinking of brave men and women who stood up with the arm in their hands in the Slovak National Uprising. And I am thinking of the Jewish fighters from Novaky concentration camp who joined them in this fight.

I am thinking of people who opposed the communist regime—dissidents, members of secret church, environmentalists. I am thinking of Vaclav Havel writing his letters from communist prisons. I am thinking of the first days of the Velvet Revolution in November 1989. Although we managed to bring tens of thousands of people to the Slovak squares, the victory was not guaranteed yet. Some of us had always a toothbrush in our pockets in case we would be arrested. I remember how our movement Public Against Violence brought Alexander Dubcek, the hero of 1968, to the podium at the main square in Bratislava to address the public after 20 years of silence. For many Slovaks, this was the glorious moment of catharsis and reborn hope.

I remember the unforgettable speech of the then Czechoslovak President Vaclav Havel, for whom I worked as his human rights advisor, before the Joint Session of Congress in February 1990. Twelve years later, I am asking for your continued support for Slovakia, one part of former common states of Czechs and Slovaks, and hopefully a future part of a bigger community of NATO's nations.

And last, but not least, I have before my eyes an incredible public mobilization before our last 1998 parliamentary elections, when 84 percent of our citizens turned out and voted out the previous government whose undemocratic practices prevented Slovakia's entry into NATO. And I remember why there was so much hope in the air: People in Slovakia believed that our country would move closer to the community of freedom-loving, democratic nations, and would get another chance to join the Alliance.

Since then, we have come a long way. One part of our mission is almost accomplished. We are looking with confidence to the Prague Summit.

Mr. Chairman, distinguished Members of the U.S. Congress, dear friends, I thank you for your support of Slovakia. We are ready. Thank you for your attention.

[The prepared statement of Ambassador Butora follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HIS EXCELLENCY MARTIN BUTORA, AMBASSADOR OF SLOVAKIA

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished members of the Committee,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear Friends,

We have come here today to respond to questions about our aspirations to join NATO and our contributions to the Alliance. While my longer written statement provides an detailed overview of Slovakia's accomplishments in political, economic, and military reforms, of our capacities to help NATO to meet its mission, as well as of our challenges in moving from a de facto ally to a real ally, let me dwell in my remarks on a broader context of this process.

Slovakia wants to join NATO because of her past, and perhaps even more, because of her future. We are convinced that Slovakia will be a better country as the member state of NATO, that NATO will be a better Alliance with Slovakia, and that the United States' interests will be better served with a stronger and bigger NATO that includes Slovakia.

We want to join NATO because we never want to repeat our past. Believe me, each family in Slovakia remembers the horrors of the 20th century, when Slovaks underwent two world wars and lived under two dictatorships. We have in our bones an experience of what it means to be attacked, to be occupied, and to be bombed. That is why we were so strongly with you after September 11, why thousands of rank and file Slovaks stood in their deep sorrow and prayers. And that is why our intelligence, our law enforcement institutions, and our military offered total and immediate cooperation in the fight against terrorism.

Mr. Chairman, I am here to testify, to be asked, and to respond. Yet for the most of the 20th century, we were not asked about our opinion. Both foreign and domestic dictatorial regimes applied an entirely different approach. We were not asked when Hitler in September 1938 pushed for Munich Agreement, which led to the end of then Czecho-Slovakia. We were not asked when Nazis entered our territory to suppress the Slovak National Uprising, one of the largest revolts in the wartime Europe. After communists took over in 1948, our monks and nuns were not asked when their sanctuaries were assaulted. Our farmers were not inquired whether they wanted to be subjugated to enforced collectivization. Thousands of people were not questioned when they were sent to prisons for invented crimes.

And obviously, we were not asked when Soviet-led troops invaded our country in August 1968 and crushed an attempt to make socialism more human, lead by the Slovak reformist Alexander Dubček.

Mr. Chairman, in those dark days of Nazi and communist dictatorships, the very word "hearing" had a completely different connotation. It meant rather "interrogation" (or *výsluch* in Slovak language) of someone dangerous for the regime. I still see before my eyes the endless corridors and inhospitable rooms in the ominous building of the Communist secret police in Bratislava where I was brought to be "asked."

That is why we, the citizens of Slovakia, are today coming with an unambiguous answer to your question: never again. We want to enter NATO as a community of freedom-loving nations. We want a different future for our children. We want to realize our dream, a Europe whole and free, democratic and undivided.

In the years, which have passed from historical 1999 Washington NATO Summit, we in Slovakia have moved ahead. The evaluations provided by teams of NATO and European Union experts or by independent analysts show Slovakia as a functioning market democracy. We have now firmly anchored democratic institutions. We amended our Constitution in accordance with our integration needs. We have strengthened the independence of our judiciary. Our media are vibrant and free. We moved ahead in decentralization. Vast majority of our GDP is generated by the private sector. We are successfully privatizing our banks and natural monopolies. But not only that. As it was expressed by an investor like the U.S. Steel, "one of

Slovakia's most valuable assets is its well-educated and skilled people," a workforce "which can match up with that of any steel company in the world." Yes, that is precisely what we strive to achieve: to catch up with the most advanced ones, as we did by becoming a member of the OECD in the year 2000 and as we are doing in our negotiations with the European Union. And to match up with the best.

Mr. Chairman, similarly to other candidate countries, contemporary Slovakia is a great social laboratory, which is facing many challenges. We have to cope with high unemployment, fight corruption, reform our health care and pension systems, improve living conditions of our Roma population—just to name a few of them. We have to cope with popular frustration, with disillusion and disenchantment. But we are on the right track.

While everyone agrees that both with regard to the capacity of our armed forces and to our strategic position, Slovakia is well suited to become a useful member, I would like to remind you that our commitment to the values cherished by the Alliance is deeper and persist longer than just the last decade—and goes actually both ways.

Slovak Americans stood side by side their fellow Americans in fight for freedom and peace of Europe in the WWII. One of them, Sgt. Michael Strank stands for them and for all of us at the Iwo Jima Memorial here in Washington among five other flag raisers. And there are others who have lived to teach us a lesson of friendship and strategic partnership. I am proud to introduce to you, Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the Subcommittee, Mr. George Bobal of Clifton, New Jersey. A devoted American patriot and a good Slovak in his heart, George Bobal served his country in the 1st Army Corps' Company A 509 Special Forces Unit. On June 6, 1944 he stormed the Omaha Beach with thousands of others. Later on, he led Company A 713 Military Police Unit protecting President Harry Truman and other American dignitaries at the Potsdam Peace Conference. Staff Sergeant Bobal was one of the first GIs to enter Berlin—this photograph is a caption of this memorable moment.

There were also American pilots who flew missions to supply provisions and weaponry in support of the 1944 Slovak anti-Nazi resistance. Some of them were shot down over Slovakia on their bombing raid missions to Germany and then cared for by courageous Slovaks. Last summer, we welcomed them at our newly built Embassy in Washington.

Mr. Chairman, as you can see in the materials provided for the record, Slovakia offers what she can for security challenges we face today. With the Slovak soldiers operating in East Timor and Eritrea/Ethiopia, in Golan Heights and Cyprus, with the Slovak participation in the KFOR joint Czecho-Slovak battalion in Kosovo, with a common Slovak-Czech-Polish brigade in preparation. I am sure President Rudolf Schuster will also elaborate on this subject while meeting with President George Bush in early June. Thanks to the intensive modernization of our armed forces aimed at building relatively small, but highly qualified and well trained units, Slovakia is becoming a trustworthy partner in the struggle against both the traditional enemies of freedom as well as against all yet unknown threats of terrorist perpetrators.

Let me assure you that our population is aware of these challenges. According to the polls, during the past three years, the support for Slovakia's membership in NATO has spread to the majority of population and grew beyond 60 percent. And—what is even more important—this support is based on a serious knowledge about the Alliance. Our citizens care much more about the foreign politics than a decade ago. They comprehend that to be admitted to NATO means not only to find a safe haven for investors like US Steel, Whirlpool, or Motorola who found their place in Slovakia, but also to protect our own freedom, democracy, and open society.

This steady growth of public support for NATO has not been achieved by government alone. It is also the outcome of enthusiastic involvement of our civic activists from nongovernmental organizations. Their participation in the educational campaign on NATO has been of vital importance for increasing public understanding of national security issues and for strengthening public support for our membership in the Alliance. And I am confident that in the coming months, Slovak civic associations will do their legwork to get out the vote and to boost informed and responsible electoral behavior in the September 2002 parliamentary elections.

Mr. Chairman, since Washington Summit Slovakia has played an active role in the international community. We have improved our relationships with our neighbors in the Central Europe. We have helped to restore the spirit of cooperation among Visegrad countries—Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic—which strongly support our integration aspiration. After a persuasive civic campaign called OK '98 that contributed to an 84 percent voter turnout and to democratic rebirth of Slovakia in

1998, our civic leaders have been also active abroad, sharing their experience and democratic know-how with their partners in Ukraine, Croatia, and especially Serbia.

From the very beginning, Slovakia has been a dynamic member of the Vilnius group, in particular known as a strong advocate of solidarity. As many people in this room know, we have been systematically struggling for enhancing the chances of our Baltic friends. We did our best to promote the strategic importance of the Southern dimension of enlargement. And we have in our minds and hearts integration horizons for those next in line, like Croatia and others. It is because we are so deeply convinced about the importance of this "coalition of the willing"; a coalition prepared to defend the ideas of freedom, democracy, and open society. Now, at the threshold of the Prague NATO Summit, it is more and more clear that the creation of such a coalition has required not only leadership back home in candidate countries and a coordinated effort of their embassies here in Washington—but it has needed a determined and visionary American leadership.

Mr. Chairman, let me thank you and the members of the U.S. Congress, the Administration of President Bush as well as to other leading policy makers and devoted supporters such as U.S. Committee on NATO for this involvement.

Dear friends, we are living in unique times: in a few months, the map of Europe, and thus the map of the world will be redrawn. As this rendezvous with history is approaching, I am thinking of many participants and witnesses on this road.

As I am sitting here, I think of my relatives who came to this country in the beginning of the twentieth century. Together with almost two million of other hard-working and law-abiding Slovaks, who had decided to escape poverty and to seek liberty in their new homeland, they contributed to prosperity and democracy in America.

I am thinking of people of integrity who despite very difficult circumstances did not betray their souls and resisted the evil. I am thinking of my father-in-law and other brave men and women, who stood up with the arm in their hands in the Slovak National Uprising. And I am thinking of the Jewish fighters from Novaky concentration camp who joined them in this fight.

I am thinking of people who opposed the communist regime—dissidents, members of secret church, environmentalists, independent social scientists, actors and writers. I am thinking of Vaclav Havel writing his letters from communist prisons. I am thinking of other "positive deviants," as we called people trying to live decent lives among the prevailing communist oppression and schizophrenia.

And obviously, I am thinking of the first days of the Velvet Revolution in November 1989. Although we managed to bring tens of thousands people to the Slovak squares, the victory was not guaranteed yet. Some of us had always a toothbrush in our pockets, in case we would be arrested. I remember how our movement Public Against Violence brought Alexander Dubcek, the hero of 1968, to the podium at the main square in Bratislava to address the public after twenty years of silence. For many Slovaks, this was the glorious moment of catharsis and reborn hope.

I remember the unforgettable speech of the then Czecho-Slovak President Vaclav Havel, for whom I worked as his human rights advisor, before the Joint Session of Congress in February 1990. Eleven years later, I am asking for your continued support for Slovakia, one part of former common state of Czechs and Slovaks, and hopefully a future part of a bigger community of NATO's nations, a community that will forever keep both sides of the Atlantic together.

And last, but not least, I have before my eyes an incredible public mobilization before our last 1998 parliamentary elections, when 84 percent of our citizens turned out and voted out the previous government whose undemocratic practices prevented Slovakia's entry into NATO in the previous wave of enlargement. And I remember why there was so much hope in the air: people in Slovakia believed that the country would move closer to the community of freedom-loving, democratic nations and would get another chance to join the Alliance.

Since then, we have come a long way. One part of our mission is almost accomplished. We are looking with confidence to the historical Prague Summit.

Mr. Chairman, distinguished members of the U.S. Congress, dear friends, I ask you for your support of Slovakia. We are ready. Thank you.

Mr. GALLEGLY. Thank you, Mr. Ambassador.
Representing Slovenia, the Honorable Ambassador Kračun.
Ambassador Kračun.

**STATEMENT OF HIS EXCELLENCY DAVORIN KRAČUN,
AMBASSADOR OF SLOVENIA**

Ambassador KRAČUN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, distinguished Members of the Committee, let me join my colleague Ambassadors of the Vilnius group and express my appreciation for having an opportunity to present to you Slovenia as a credible future ally.

Ten years ago, Slovenia gained independence in order to become part of a safe and democratic world, sharing a common system of values, and to help consolidate it. When Slovenia opted for independence, we did not opt for isolation; on the contrary—we opted for Euro-Atlantic integration. We want to live as an integral part of Europe, whole, free, and at peace.

To meet this objective, two strategic national security and foreign policy priorities have been naturally evolved: Namely membership in NATO and European Union. These two priorities are not competing with each other, nor is one superior to another. They are simply two sides of the same coin. There is the broadest political consent among Sloven-parliamentary parties, both in coalition government and in opposition, as well as among the majority of Sloven citizens. Slovenia is therefore firmly resolved to meet the required criteria for NATO with full responsibility.

The world after September 11 has changed. In that tragic event for American people, we have demonstrated that we can be a trusted ally. Within a few hours of the attack in New York and Washington, intelligence was provided and various forms of aid were offered. Slovenia joined the anti-terrorist coalition with full public consensus. In this fight, Slovenia joined the broad coalition of democratic countries in order to act comprehensively, thoroughly and with determination. The danger posed by international terrorism affect all states and all individuals equally. Slovenia is not excluded from this threat.

The National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia has adopted the declaration on Joint Fight Against Terrorism with which it shares the determination of the international community in the fight against terrorism and calls for the implementation of concrete measures in this fight. The Government of the Republic of Slovenia has adopted relevant decisions on concrete activities which have been resolutely carried out.

There are clear and unambiguous geo-political and strategic benefits that Slovenia brings to NATO. Slovenia is a well established democracy whose political stability is an important regional asset. Slovenia is the success story in the economic field. In the regional context, it is one of the most important economic partner to other new states in Southeastern Europe. As far as human rights, and the rights of minorities are concerned, Slovenia is cited in U.S. reports on human rights as nearly an impeccable case. The rule of law is further reinforced by intensive legislative work in the frame work of preparation for EU membership. Slovenia is also among the countries with the lowest rate of corruption.

Our relations with neighbors—Italy, Hungary, Austria, and Croatia—are in good shape.

From the geo-strategic point of view, Slovenia's inclusion into NATO will further strengthen NATO southern flank by first bridging present NATO territory from Italy to Hungary, and then hope-

fully its extension to Romania and Bulgaria. From NATO's perspective, its Central European position makes Slovenia also easily defensible.

We believe that our contribution is the most effective in the area we know best—our southeastern neighborhood. From today on an additional motorized company is ready to be deployed, thus doubling our participation in the NATO-led operations in Bosnia and Kosovo.

International Trust for Demining and Mine Victims Assistance (ITF) a joint U.S.-Slovene project, is the leading demining institution in the Southeastern Europe and is responsible for two-thirds of all demining in the region.

Slovenia has made a big step forward in the reforming and modernizing its defense establishment and military forces. A week ago the Slovene government adopted a decision on the accelerated transformation from present conscript army toward fully professional armed forces. Compulsory military service is planned to cease in mid-2004. This will enable us to speed up the creation of the main reaction forces of the brigade size which will be totally interoperable and compatible in terms of tactics, logistics and equipment with NATO standards.

An accelerated professionalization of the armed forces will require revision of the present budget. The new budget cycle, which is to start in July, will take into account this new development. Adequate financing through accelerated increase of the budget, redefinition of the priorities under the Basic Development Program and other inner reforms within the Ministry of Defense are anxious to meet these increased demands.

Mr. Chairman, distinguished Members of the Committee, all above is the best proof that Slovenia does not take NATO membership for granted. On the contrary, we will do everything that is in our power to demonstrate that Slovenia is worth it.

Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Ambassador Kračun follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HIS EXCELLENCY DAVORIN KRAČUN, AMBASSADOR OF SLOVENIA

Let me join my college Ambassadors of the Vilnius group and express my appreciation for having an opportunity to present to you Slovenia as a credible future Ally.

Ten years ago, Slovenia gained independence in order to become part of a safe and democratic world, sharing a common system of values, and to help consolidate it. Slovenia enshrined these values among its priorities at its very birth. When Slovenia opted for independence, we did not opt for isolation; on the contrary—we opted for Euro-Atlantic integration. We want to live as an integral part of Europe, whole, free and at peace.

To meet this objective two strategic national security and foreign policy priorities have been naturally evolved: namely membership in NATO and European Union. These two priorities are not competing with each other nor is one superior to another. They are simply two sides of the same coin. Because they are stemming out of vital national interests it is no surprise that there is the broadest political consent among all Slovene parliamentary parties both in coalition government and in opposition as well as among the majority of Slovene citizens. Slovenia is therefore firmly resolved to meet the required criteria for NATO membership painstakingly and with full responsibility.

The world after September 11 has changed. In that tragic event for American people we have demonstrated that we can be a trusted ally. Within a few hours of the attack in New York and Washington, intelligence was provided and various forms of aid were offered. All internal measures were swift and to the point. Slovenia

joined the anti-terrorist coalition with full public consensus. In this fight Slovenia joined the broad coalition of democratic countries in order to act comprehensively, thoroughly and with determination. The danger, posed by international terrorism, affects all states and all individuals equally. Slovenia is not excluded from this threat.

By engaging in and implementing the measures adopted by NATO, EAPC and the Vilnius group as well as by other international fora Slovenia clearly and resolutely places itself on the side of anti-terrorist alliance.

The National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia has adopted the Declaration on Joint Fight against Terrorism, with which it shares the determination of the international community in the uniform and common fight against terrorism, and calls for the implementation of concrete measures in this fight. The Government of the Republic of Slovenia has adopted relevant decisions on concrete activities, which have been resolutely carried out.

There are clear and unambiguous geo-political and strategic reasons for inviting Slovenia to NATO. Slovenia is a well-established democracy whose political stability is an important regional asset. She is the success story in the economic field, both in terms of transition as well as macroeconomics. In the regional context it is one of the most important economic partner to other new states on the South Eastern Europe. As far as human rights and the rights of the minorities are concerned, Slovenia is cited in the US reports on human rights as nearly an impeccable case. The rule of law is further reinforced by intensive legislative work in the framework of the preparation for EU membership. Slovenia is also among the countries with the lowest rate of corruption. Our relations with our four neighbors—two NATO members, Italy and Hungary, one EU member-neutral Austria and one aspiring NATO candidate—Croatia, are all in very good shape.

From the geo-strategic point of view, Slovenia's inclusion into NATO will further strengthen NATO's southern flank by first bridging present NATO territory from Italy to Hungary and then hopefully its extension to Romania and Bulgaria. From NATO's perspective, its central European positioning makes Slovenia also easy defendable.

We believe that our contribution is the most effective in the area we know best—our southeastern neighborhood. From today on an additional motorized company is ready to deploy thus doubling our participation in the NATO led operations in Bosnia and in Kosovo. General Sylvester, commander of the SFOR and general Ralston, Supreme Commander have just concluded their visits in Slovenia, and both have highly praised Slovene military contribution in the area.

International Trust for Demining and Mine Victims Assistance (ITF), a joint US-Slovene project, is the leading demining institution in the South Eastern Europe and is responsible for two thirds of all demining in the region.

Slovenia has made a big step forward in reforming and modernizing its defense establishment and military forces. A week ago the Slovene government adopted a decision on the accelerated transformation from present conscript army towards fully professional armed forces. Compulsory military service is planned to cease in mid 2004 and compulsory service in the reserve force at the end of 2010.

This will enable us to speed up the creation of the main reaction forces of the brigade size, which will be totally interoperable and compatible in terms of tactics, logistics and equipment with NATO standards. A good deal of the 10th battalion of this force is already now deployed under NATO flag in SFOR and KFOR in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Kosovo.

All this will not be possible without adequate recourses, human, material and financial. Slovenia has invested heavily in proper education and training of its officers, NCOs and soldiers. We have already today approximately the same percentage of English speaking members in the armed forces you would find in current NATO member's forces. Through US security assistance all top military officers (more than 200) of the Slovenian Armed Forces were trained in the American military education institutions.

Back in 1996 the Slovene Parliament adopted a law according to which all military purchases and acquisitions abroad had to be in accordance with the NATO standards for interoperability. We opted for quality in order to keep up with the increasing high technology demands. Right now we are in the process of introducing the most sophisticated version of the HUMMVEE vehicles into our reaction forces.

Proper planning and budgeting are two indispensable elements of a credible defense; therefore we have adopted in last year all necessary strategic and doctrinal documents and switched to a two-year rolling budget. Both domestic and foreign estimates have indicated that the present budget of 320 million \$ would suffice for implementing basic defense reforms.

An accelerated professionalization of the armed forces will require revision of the present budget. The new budget cycle, which is to start in July, will take into account this new development. Adequate financing through accelerated increase of the budget, redefinition of the priorities under the Basic Development Program and other inner reforms within the Ministry of Defense are envisaged to meet this increased demands.

The width and the depth of activities undertaken by the Slovene Government, Parliament, and NGOs is to bring up our military capability in line with our future obligations in the Alliance, as well as our concrete participation in NATO peace-support operations and in broader antiterrorist coalition. All above is the best proof that we do not take NATO membership for granted. On the contrary. We will do everything that is in our power to demonstrate that we are worth it.

With your assistance and support and through our commitment we will continue with our overall preparations, which will put us in a position to contribute to future NATO missions. We are aware that this is a challenging task and that much remains to be done. We are also confident that we will deliver and based on this, we hope Slovenia at the Prague Summit will merit an invitation to join the Alliance.

Mr. GALLEGLY. Thank you very much, Mr. Ambassador.

Now representing Lithuania, Ambassador Ušackas. We have all patiently been waiting for your presentation.

Mr. Ambassador.

**STATEMENT OF HIS EXCELLENCY VYGAUDAS UŠACKAS,
AMBASSADOR OF LITHUANIA**

Ambassador UŠACKAS. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Being the last speaker, it also give me the privilege to follow my speech, but I am going to disappoint you. I am going to also make some—going to use some time and present my remarks with respect to NATO enlargement.

Let me ask you also for the record to include my oral presentation.

Mr. GALLEGLY. Without objection the entire statement of each of the witnesses today will be made a part of the record of the hearing.

Ambassador UŠACKAS. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

What you have just seen and heard from my fellow Ambassadors about our countries' readiness, about our countries' commitment; and the value added to the alliance and the importance of enlargement tells pieces of the story. I will now try to summarize and put these thoughts into perspective.

And let me try to use my personal experience and the history I learned in school as a metaphor for what is at stake.

My country has been occupied three times in the 20th century. It was under the yoke of communism for more than 40 years—a political system that pushed hundreds of thousands of my countrymen and those of my Baltic neighbors into forced exile.

For you in America, Siberia and the Gulag were the embodiment of a cold, frozen, barren place—the ends of civilization. For us, it was a very real place, a place where our families were sent into exile, a place where dreams were meant to die.

Our dream, like those of your forefathers, was to live in freedom and independence, where democracy was a way of life, where morals and values were embedded in the lifeblood of our citizens. Your country was always our inspiration and for 50 years we held on to your non-recognition of our occupation.

As a student in the late eighties, I became politically active because I understood that no matter what dangers might be involved

it was imperative that my world needed to change. And this fundamental change was worth fighting for. Like Ambassador Martin Butora in the then Czechoslovakia or the many others involved in the cause for freedom, we did not stop to think of the consequences; we only knew this is the most important fight we would ever wage.

In this fight, Mr. Chairman, NATO represented to us the ultimate goal of freedom. Thus in 1994, my government committed itself to strive for membership, like did many other countries represented here. Many in the West at that time laughed or even scoffed at our hopes as highly unlikely, unreal, a pipedream. But we persisted and continued the hard work, continued to make the hard decisions.

After Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic were admitted, we began to believe that we could succeed too. The 1999 Washington NATO Summit has reinforced that belief. And I am proud that a new level of cooperation was born in my country exactly 2 years ago with the Vilnius group.

We have all continued the hard work toward reforms. We have all made great efforts to act as allies and show how we add value, both militarily and politically. Our commitment to reforms reaches far beyond the Prague Summit because our long-term objective is to make our countries the best democracies and the best allies possible.

September 11 made us all reassess the criticality of alliances. It made us realize how much more important were friends we could trust and rely on. We have shown by our deeds we are ready, willing and committed to work with the United States and other allies in the war on terrorism. We can be counted on.

Our inclusion in the security structures of NATO will not make NATO unwieldy or unmanageable; quite the contrary, it will add a group of nations, prepared to act, who have devoted the resources and made the commitment to deal with a changing world, a group of nations who truly understand the moral imperative for freedom and democracy, and the values and responsibilities that come with them.

What happens in Prague in November has significant long-term historical consequences. It is about tearing down the last vestiges of an enforced oppression. It is about realigning Europe closer to its rightful borders. It is about righting historical wrongs. It is about creating the architecture of the Europe of the 21st century, and adapting the most successful alliance ever in the history to the new challenges of the 21st century. It is probably the most important decisions affecting our countries that will happen during our diplomatic careers. It is truly a rendezvous with history.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ambassador Ušackas follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HIS EXCELLENCY VYGAUDAS UŠACKAS, AMBASSADOR OF
LITHUANIA

Mr. Chairman, Excellences, Ladies and Gentleman:

In my prepared remarks I deal specifically with my country and the value I believe it adds to the Alliance. I will not repeat that here but simply ask that a copy of my prepared remarks be included in the record.

What you have just seen and heard from my fellow Ambassadors about our countries, level of preparation, state of readiness, value added to the Alliance and the

importance of enlargement tells pieces of the story. I will now try to summarize and put these thoughts into perspective.

Let me try to use my personal experiences and the history I learned in school as a metaphor for what is at stake.

My country has been occupied three times in the 20th century. It was under the yoke of communism for more than 40 years—a political system that pushed hundreds of thousands of my countrymen and those of my Baltic neighbors into forced exile.

For you in America, Siberia and the Gulag were the embodiment of a cold, frozen barren place—the ends of civilization. For us, it was a very real place, a place where our families were sent into exile, a place where dreams were meant to die.

Our dream, like those of your forefathers, was to live in freedom and independence, where democracy was a way of life, where morals and values were embedded in the lifeblood of our citizens. America represented to us, everything we longed for, everything we hoped for. Your country was always our inspiration and for 50 years we held on to your non-recognition of our occupation.

As a student in the late eighties, I became politically active because I understood that no matter what dangers might be involved it was imperative that my world needed to change. And this fundamental change was worth fighting for. Like Ambassador Butora in the then Czechoslovakia or the many others involved in the cause for freedom, we didn't stop to think of the consequences, we only knew this was the most important fight we would ever wage.

In this fight, NATO represented to us the ultimate guarantee of freedom. Thus in 1994 my government committed itself to strive for membership, like did many other countries represented here. Many in the West laughed or scoffed at our hopes as highly unlikely, unreal, a pipedream. But we persisted and continued the hard work, continued to make the hard decisions.

After Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic were admitted we began to believe that we could succeed, that the old barriers were being broken down and that we could stand shoulder to shoulder with the Alliance as contributing partners. The 1999 Washington NATO summit reinforced this belief. And I am proud that a new level of cooperation was born in my country in May, 2000 with the Vilnius group.

We have all continued the hard work towards reforms, militarily and economically, we have all made great efforts to act as allies and show how we add value, both militarily and politically. Our commitment to reforms reaches far beyond the Prague Summit because our long-term objective is to make our countries the best democracies and best allies possible.

September 11 made us all reassess the criticality of Alliances. It made us realize how much more important were friends we could trust and rely on. We have shown by our deeds we are ready, willing and committed to work with the U.S. and other allies in the war on terrorism. We can be counted on. Our inclusion in the security structures of NATO will not make the Alliance unwieldy or unmanageable; quite the contrary, it will add a group of nations, prepared to act, who have devoted the resources and made the commitment to deal with a changing world; a group of nations who truly understand the moral imperative of freedom and democracy, and the values and responsibilities that come with them.

What happens in Prague in November has significant long term historical consequences. It is about tearing down the last vestiges of an enforced oppression, it is about realigning Europe closer to its rightful borders, it is about righting historical wrongs; it is about creating the architecture of the Europe of the 21st century and adapting the most successful security Alliance ever to the new challenges of the 21st century. It is probably the most important decisions affecting our countries that will happen during our careers. It truly is a rendezvous with history.

Mr. GALLEGLY. Thank you very much, Mr. Ambassador, and thank you to all of the witnesses today. There is no question for this Committee that you have all made a very articulate and compelling argument for your role in this process, and how important this process is to each and everyone of you.

I have many questions to ask each of you that I would like to have a part of the record, but in fairness to everyone that is here today I think it would be difficult to start picking one for one and one for another, and not have it perceived that I feel one person's testimony is more important than the other, and I do not want to get into that, particularly considering the hour.

But with the Committee's concurrence, I would like to submit some of the questions I have, and would invite those of other Members of the Committee for your written response that we could make a permanent part of the—or official part of the record of the hearing.

And without objection, that will be the order.

I thank all of you for your patience. I thank all of you for your obvious commitment to the process, and I look forward to continuing to work with you. I wish you all very, very well in this process.

Mr. SMITH. Mr. Chairman.

Mr. GALLEGLY. Yes. Nick Smith.

Mr. SMITH. May I just offer one question if it would be appropriate at this time.

Mr. GALLEGLY. You can ask whatever you would like. This is America. [Laughter.]

Mr. SMITH. Just trying to evaluate where we go and the different goals of the new NATO. NATO, of course, originally, as I perceived it, was an effort during the cold war period to have some unity in Europe, protecting against a potential invasion from the Soviet Union.

Just sort of a far-reaching question. What would happen if we included Russia in NATO? And this is for anybody who would like to respond to that. I mean, they have different goals, but how does the new Russia play into the concept and goals of the new NATO? Anybody wish to respond to that?

Mr. GALLEGLY. Would you like to direct it to anyone in particular, Mr. Smith.

Mr. SMITH. No, I am not sure. I think I would rather look for volunteers.

Mr. GALLEGLY. Mr. Jurgenson?

Ambassador JURGENSON. I think it is a very good question, and we all welcome very, very warmly the new relationship between NATO and Russia, and the new NATO/Russia body that will be created.

But when it comes to Russian membership, then Russia has been very ambiguous with its own plans, and secondly, NATO enlargement has criteria from 1995. NATO enlargement study named five NATO enlargement criteria. And this is what we have been talking all about here. That is coming from Membership Action Plan, earlier on from PFB, and if Russia fulfills the criteria, I think Russia will be a very good NATO member.

Mr. SMITH. Any other thoughts? Ambassador, you had a comment.

Ambassador UŠACKAS. Yes, Mr. Congressman.

I think in looking at the long-term perspective and having in mind particularly the history of the Baltic states, it is of our interest to have Russia part of integrated Europe, a country which would correspond to the same kind of ideals and principles as any other, I mean, European democracy.

At the moment Russia has not expressed an interest to join NATO. We respect their right. And I am glad to report to you that Russia also respects the right of the Baltic nations to join NATO,

as President Putin did during the meeting with my President, Valdas Adamkus, exactly 1 year ago.

At the same time having said this, I believe—I mean, the previous enlargement of NATO has already proved that accession of Poland, Czech Republic and Hungary was of benefit not only to this nation but to also regions with Russia, and that is going to be also the case as Baltic and other nations will join in, and it will strengthen the stability in Europe as well as contribute to a new relationship which is being shaped between NATO and Russia, which we certainly welcome.

Mr. SMITH. My second question, Mr. Chairman, would be: Do you see a diminished role of the United States' participation in NATO?

Ambassador UŠACKAS. To me, Mr. Congressman, I think on the contrary. I mean, the United States was, is and will remain from our point of view the leader of NATO alliance in shaping its policies and contributing militarily, which we strongly welcome and wish to preserve.

Mr. SMITH. Anyone else on the role of the U.S. in the new NATO alliance?

Yes, Ambassador.

Ambassador DUCARU. Well, I think the mere fact that we want to become NATO members and that we are conducting this hearing today prove the value that our countries give to the U.S. involvement in Europe, the importance that we award to the U.S. presence and NATO presence in Europe and to the U.S. role within NATO and within Europe.

As a couple of us were able to mention, the U.S. has had a leading role within NATO, and this has been essential in stimulating the evolutions in our countries. We consider that this U.S. leadership is a valuable asset that should be preserved within NATO, also within a larger NATO. So we very much care in preserving U.S. role within NATO and in Europe.

Mr. SMITH. It would just be my impression that the U.S. role probably was more valuable in early years with NATO. And to the extent that the greater involvement of military strength of the United States diminishes the efforts of the European NATO countries, then I think there is some good arguments for the United States maybe to play a lesser role than it has in the past.

And with that, if somebody would like to respond.

Ambassador DUCARU. Just shortly. First, there has to be an increased participation of European and contribution of Europeans to the security in Europe and also beyond. And that is why there is this debate on capabilities within NATO. But while we are looking forward to having this European contribution, and our countries' contribution within NATO, and more articulate, we think that U.S. leadership is essential in this process of shaping the evolution of a future NATO.

Mr. GALLEGLY. I see that Ambassador Tarifa would like to contribute.

Ambassador TARIFA. Brief comment. More role or less rule is going to be a leadership role that no other member of NATO can play not only within the NATO framework but in today's world politics, I think. So the NATO is irreplaceable. Thank you.

Mr. GALLEGLY. Again, I thank you all. Thank you, Mr. Smith, and with that we will conclude the hearing, and the Subcommittee stands adjourned. Thank you all.

[Whereupon, at 3:27 p.m., the Subcommittee was adjourned.]

