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Affairs
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Chairman Johnson, Ranking Member Cardin, Members of the Committee: Thank you for the opportunity to discuss NATO, the critical role it plays in our security and the advance of freedom, and Montenegro's integral part in this journey as NATO's latest invitee. In the wake of a successful NATO Summit in Warsaw and almost exactly eight years after this Committee's last hearing on NATO enlargement, I am honored to be here with you today.

I will begin today with a discussion of NATO's purpose; the role that NATO enlargement has played in advancing security and stability in Europe; Montenegro's candidacy; and the future of the NATO Alliance as put forth in the Communique of July's Warsaw Summit.

NATO's Purpose

NATO has been and remains the principal security instrument of the transatlantic community. It is both a defensive Alliance and an Alliance of values. It is not an alliance directed against any nation. Article 5 – NATO's collective defense commitment – mentions neither the Soviet Union nor any specific adversary.

NATO's primary purpose was and remains to defend its members from attack. Additionally, NATO brought together western nations under a political and security umbrella under which old rivalries could be reconciled and general peace in Europe could prevail. A third purpose was to institutionalize transatlantic bonds. In the Cold War, NATO succeeded: under its umbrella, much of Europe remained free and united.

Article 5 remains the core of the Alliance. When the United States was attacked on September 11, 2001, NATO invoked Article 5 for the first time in its history. Even with collective defense as its bedrock, new threats have arisen. Today, NATO is operating in support of cybersecurity, counterterrorism, and counter-human trafficking operations throughout the transatlantic space. It is active on the European continent, in Kosovo, on the eastern and southern flanks of the European continent, and in Afghanistan and other such regions. Thus, NATO has developed

new capabilities and skills for the future and for working with strategic partners all over the globe.

Post-Warsaw and against the backdrop of Russia's aggression in Ukraine and its occupation and attempted annexation of Crimea, NATO is moving forward with the most significant reinforcement of collective defense at any time since the Cold War. Allies have agreed to institutionalize a more sustained approach to deterrence, including by enhancing NATO's forward presence in the East. To support this commitment, President Obama has requested \$3.4 billion in 2017 to fund the European Reassurance Initiative. With your support, these funds will be used for the deployment of an additional rotational Armored Brigade Combat Team (ABCT) to Central and Eastern Europe, the prepositioning of combat equipment, and additional trainings and exercises in Europe.

All of the actions we have taken to strengthen our deterrence and defense require appropriate investment in capabilities, the development of highly-capable and deployable forces, and most importantly, a healthy dose of burden-sharing among Allies. Already, the 27 other Allies outside of the United States are providing for 78% of NATO's budget. The non-U.S. share of the budget is going up again. Increasingly, Allies will make significant contributions to improve NATO's readiness, responsiveness, and interoperability and reverse the slide in defense budgets. All 28 Allies are moving toward spending at least two percent of GDP on defense with seventy percent already on track to meet that goal by 2024, the target date we agreed to in Wales and reaffirmed in Warsaw this summer.

NATO Enlargement

After the fall of the Iron Curtain, NATO enlargement took on a profound strategic meaning: the countries that had liberated themselves from communism found themselves on unsteady ground. Membership in NATO and the EU became their main goals—a way to cement themselves in the institutions and values of the transatlantic world. For the United States and other NATO members, NATO enlargement, along with EU enlargement, became the means by which to further their own goals of “Europe whole, free and at peace.”

With these incentives, Central and Eastern European countries set aside nationalist rivalries, and began much-needed reforms in governance, media freedom, and economic openness.

NATO made its first decisions about post-Cold War enlargement in 1999, and security, stability, and democracy deepened in Central Europe. The most recent round of enlargement in 2009 brought Croatia and Albania into our community of democracies. During the process and since, both countries undertook significant democratic and institutional reforms, affecting rule of law, media freedom, constitutional issues, and the defense and security sectors. They have stood beside us in Afghanistan and both have committed to increasing defense spending to 2 percent of their GDP by 2024.

Montenegro

The post-Cold War era has brought unprecedented peace and stability to much – but notably not all – of Europe. The Balkan wars of the 1990s were a stark reminder of this fact. NATO's engagement in the region was difficult, but necessary. And as declared by Alliance Heads of State and Government in Warsaw, NATO remains committed to the region. Our work there is not complete.

We believe that NATO enlargement – along with EU enlargement – can bring the Balkans much closer to its deserved future as a site of peace and prosperity at the heart of Europe. Since Montenegro borders on five other Balkans nations, including NATO Allies Croatia and Albania, its NATO membership will support greater integration, democratic reform, trade, security, and stability with all of its neighbors, bringing the entire Balkans region a step closer to the U.S. strategic goal of realizing a Europe whole, free, and at peace. Montenegro joining NATO will also have a positive impact on the Alliance's effectiveness, given its commitment to defense reform, demonstrated contributions to existing operations, and willingness to continue to contribute available capabilities to future operations. Furthermore, with Montenegro's accession, the Alliance will create a contiguous border along the Adriatic coast.

As a NATO aspirant, Montenegro has made clear its Euro-Atlantic trajectory is unshakeable. In this regard, it has been an example to the other aspirants in the region – Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Macedonia. In 2002, Montenegro adopted the Euro, and in 2008 it formally applied to join the EU. Montenegro has adopted a legal framework that encourages privatization, employment, and exports. Montenegro has also taken substantial steps to address public corruption and organized crime, such as establishing a new, independent Special State Prosecutor. Montenegro's progress in strengthening rule of law and addressing corruption concerns will help bolster Montenegro's economic stability and improve its attractiveness as a destination for foreign direct investment.

Montenegro has made great strides to meet NATO standards by implementing reforms in the defense, intelligence, and security sectors, and by taking to heart the mentorship given by Allies in successive rounds of NATO's Membership Action Plan, or MAP. Montenegro has been a reliable partner and force provider to NATO, EU, and UN missions. The country contributed to NATO's operations in Afghanistan, most recently by providing over \$1.2 million towards the sustainability of the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces. Montenegro currently has 14 troops in Afghanistan, and its forces have also participated in the EU Training Mission in Mali, the UN Mission in Liberia, and civilian police officers have been deployed to the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus. Montenegro will further deploy troops to increase its level of participation in the EU Operation Atalanta counter-piracy mission off the coast of Somalia. Montenegro has also requested to participate in NATO's Kosovo Force mission (KFOR).

Montenegro currently spends 1.68 percent of GDP on defense and, in accordance with Allied commitments, plans to spend 1.72 percent in 2017, 1.75 percent by 2019, and reach the benchmark of two percent of GDP defense spending by 2024. It is clear that the Government takes seriously the financial commitment it will undertake with NATO membership.

Finally, Article 10 of the North Atlantic Treaty spells out three mandates for new members: one, the Ally must be a European state; two, it must be in a position to further the principles of the Alliance; and three, the Ally must contribute to the security of the North Atlantic area. Montenegro clearly and demonstrably meets each of these criteria.

In recognition of its progress and potential, Allied Foreign Ministers in December 2015 unanimously agreed to invite Montenegro to join the Alliance. Following the invitation, per NATO protocol, Montenegro has deepened its engagement with the Alliance. The country is already participating in virtually all sessions of the North Atlantic Council (NAC), and has attended all Summit and Foreign and Defense Ministerial sessions as an observer. Montenegro fully participates in Allied deliberations but cannot yet be involved in decision-making.

Allies' invitation for Montenegro to join NATO affirmed the validity and enduring nature of the Open Door policy. In May of this year, Allied Foreign Ministers signed the Accession Protocol for Montenegro; now it is in the process of national approval procedures, which differ country to country. To date, six nations have

deposited their instruments of ratification of the Accession Protocol. They are: Iceland, Slovenia, Hungary, Slovakia, Bulgaria, and Albania. Poland, and, just a few days ago, Turkey, have also completed their national approval procedures, meaning that more than a quarter of the Alliance has moved forward on NATO's invitation.

Once the national approval processes are complete and all NATO Allies have deposited their respective instruments of ratification with the United States (the depositary nation of the Treaty), the United States will notify the NATO Secretary General that the Accession Protocol has entered into force. The Secretary General will in turn issue an invitation to Montenegro to accede to the Treaty. Then, upon Montenegro's deposit with the United States of its instrument of accession to the Treaty, Montenegro will legally become party to the Treaty and a NATO Ally.

Since its invitation, Montenegro has gone above and beyond to show its willingness to be a productive member of the Alliance. It has been a partner on successive rounds of sanctions following Russia's occupation and attempted annexation of Crimea. In the face of Russian pressure, it has worked tirelessly over the past year and a half to increase public support for NATO through public debates, town hall meetings, and engagement with NGOs and a free media—all hallmarks of a democratic society. In June, Montenegro's hard work came to fruition when its Parliament passed a resolution with a two-thirds majority, expressing full support for membership in the Alliance.

Of course, Montenegro also has its challenges. We have made clear that we expect reforms to continue, and to hold. But given its progress so far, this Administration sees a historic window of opportunity to have Montenegro become an official member of our transatlantic community with the hope that it will expand its participation as a member even further.

Montenegro will be an example, not only to other countries in the Balkans, but also to other NATO partners. Over decades, the promise of NATO membership and broader Euro-Atlantic integration has advanced our democratic values, and respect for the rule of law. It has served as an incentive for nations to pursue often difficult reforms. This policy has yielded clear results. The Open Door policy remains viable and NATO stands by its foundational doctrine. The rules have not changed. Montenegro's accession will be an important stepping stone toward our vision of a Europe whole, free, and at peace.

Looking Forward

I wish to express my thanks to the Committee for your bipartisan support over the years, not only on NATO enlargement, but for helping NATO evolve into an institution prepared for 21st century challenges. Your support for a “Europe whole, free, and at peace” has served as a beacon of hope for many countries that faced an uncertain future. Today, millions in Europe have found security, stability, and greater prosperity, in significant part as a result of being welcomed into the NATO Alliance. The advance of freedom and security in the world has sent a powerful message to many others that there is a reward for putting cooperation over conflict.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Cardin, and distinguished Members of this Committee, our work to bring hope, prosperity, and increased security to our Partners is not yet over. We urge the Senate to continue our cross-government, historic cooperation on NATO enlargement, and at the earliest opportunity to provide its advice and consent to U.S. ratification of the Accession Protocol for Montenegro.

Thank you. I look forward to your questions.