

U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
Senator Richard G. Lugar
Opening Statement for Hearing on NATO
March 11, 2008

I appreciate this opportunity for the Committee to examine the future of NATO, and I join in welcoming our distinguished witnesses.

The NATO Alliance is preparing for a historic summit in Bucharest, Romania next month. The Bucharest Summit finds NATO facing new challenges and adjusting to new priorities. Much attention is being focused on NATO's role in Afghanistan, which is the most demanding and defining combat operation in Alliance history. European troop contributions to the Afghanistan operation and the removal of caveats restricting how troops are employed will be the subject of intense discussions at the Summit.

But even as we work through the important issues related to Afghanistan, I would urge the Administration to bring an even broader vision to the deliberations in Bucharest. The recent announcement of independence by Kosovo; President Putin's statements that we are in the midst of a new arms race; Russian threats against Poland, the Czech Republic and Ukraine; and Moscow's intransigence on issues ranging from the shutting down of British cultural affairs offices to abandonment of the CFE Treaty require strategic leadership from the United States and close cooperation with NATO allies.

At the summit, I believe the Alliance must invite Albania, Croatia, and Macedonia to join NATO. Each is working hard to meet the specified requirements for membership. They occupy critical geostrategic locations and are best situated to deter any efforts by any party to destabilize the Balkans through violence. These three candidate countries also have proven their commitment to making meaningful contributions to the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan.

NATO also must extend Membership Action Plans to Georgia and Ukraine. The governments of both countries have clearly stated their desire to join NATO, and both have made remarkable progress in meeting Alliance standards. Both countries have made as much progress on democratic, economic, and military reform as Romania, Bulgaria, Slovakia, and Albania had made when they received MAPs in 1999. I understand that Georgia and Ukraine must accomplish more before they can be offered NATO membership, but extension of these MAPs is an important symbol of alliance intent.

In January, I traveled to both Georgia and Ukraine. During my visit in Georgia, President Saakashvili reiterated his hopes for a MAP. In Ukraine, President Yushchenko, Prime Minister Tymoshenko, and the Speaker of the Parliament signed a letter to the NATO Secretary General signifying the unity of purpose behind their MAP request.

If NATO is to continue to be the preeminent security Alliance and serve the defense interests of its membership, it must continue to evolve and that evolution must include enlargement. Potential NATO membership motivates emerging democracies to make important advances in areas such as the rule of law and civil society. A closer relationship with NATO will promote these values and contribute to our mutual security.

In addition to membership issues, we must ensure that meaningful progress is made on energy security. Today, the denial of energy resources is a weapon that can cripple a state as effectively as traditional armies. NATO must recognize the risk we face and begin to implement a strategy that prepares for future energy contingencies. Ukraine, Georgia, Estonia, and Lithuania have all faced hostile energy supply actions from Russia. Today, Germany, Bulgaria, Greece, Italy, Hungary, and others have signed bilateral deals with Russia that could have serious implications for European energy security and the NATO alliance. In my judgment, NATO is the only institution capable of uniting the trans-Atlantic community under a common energy policy with the urgency that this threat warrants.

Three years ago, the United States Senate unanimously voted to invite seven countries to join NATO. Today, Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia are making important contributions to NATO and are among our closest allies in the global war on terrorism. It is time again for the United States to take the lead in urging its allies to recognize the important efforts underway in Albania, Croatia, Macedonia, Georgia and Ukraine and offer them membership in NATO and Membership Action Plans accordingly.

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