

**Remarks before the U.S. Helsinki Commission  
The Honorable Michael R. Turner  
Chairman, U.S. Delegation to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly**

**May 6, 2012**

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I would like to thank Chairman Cardin and Co-Chairman Smith and the U.S. Helsinki Commission for holding this important hearing concerning our democratic partners in Albania.

The United States and Albania have long standing relations dating back almost a hundred years starting when Woodrow Wilson defended Albania's independence following World War I. Following the dissolution of the former Soviet Union, President George H.W. Bush quickly re-established relations with Albania. George W. Bush later became the first sitting President to visit Albania in 2007.

Albania led the region in bringing its people out of the closed communist society to an open democratic government with great economic opportunity.

I served as the Mayor of Dayton during the Dayton Peace Accords and have a deep understanding of the role the United States played in finding a peaceful resolution of disputes in the former Yugoslavia states. Albania and Croatia were able to emerge from the turmoil and gain entrance into NATO in 2009.

Albania has contributed significantly to the war against terrorism by contributing military forces to the ISAF effort in Afghanistan and the U.S. led efforts in Iraq. They have supported U.S. counterterrorism efforts by freezing terrorist assets, shutting down non-governmental organizations with possible links to terrorist financing, and expelling extremists. Their efforts are commendable and demonstrate the depth of their commitment to establishing a stable democratic society.

Along with the United States, Albania is a member nation of the United Nations, NATO, Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, International Monetary Fund, World Bank, and World Trade Organization. Just last year, then Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton visited Albania and recognized that the nation was on the path toward entrance to the European Union where "you rightly belong."

I must say that Albania's progression from its Soviet roots is truly amazing and deserves recognition. Furthermore, I would add that this advancement is not only important for Albania, but for the entire Balkan region.

I was very disappointed by the lack of discussion of NATO enlargement at the Chicago Summit. Montenegro and Macedonia have made incredible advances and should be encouraged to continue to take proactive steps. NATO Membership improves regional security as well as diplomatic relations and is seen as a step closer towards membership in the European Union.

However, this Administration has failed to promote NATO enlargement and done little to reassure our Trans-Atlantic partners. I fear their neglect comes at a pivotal time for many aspiring nations, particularly in the Balkans, that have taken significant proactive steps to join their democratic partners.

We should promote NATO enlargement and reward our partners in Macedonia and Montenegro. By doing so we will encourage the other aspirants in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Serbia to follow suit.

I thank our witnesses for their participation in today's hearing and look forward to learning what the Administration is doing to further promote progress in Albania and leverage the good example there for the entire region.