

Statement of Senator Benjamin L. Cardin
Co-Chairman
Commission on Security and Cooperation in
Europe
Hearing on
“Twenty-First Century Security in the OSCE
Region”
November 5, 2007

I am very pleased that the Commission is turning its attention to the military security dimension of the OSCE. For more than a quarter century, the OSCE participating States have attempted to combat conflict and instability in Europe, guided by the Helsinki Final Act’s principles and norms relating to relations between States. Sometimes those principles have prevailed. Too often they have not, with disastrous consequences for populations uprooted by conflict and horrific crimes against humanity. While at first glance the OSCE region might seem relatively calm today, the reality is that hotspots abound that could erupt through provocation or misunderstanding into actual conflict.

Only last August, the Georgian Government accused the Russian Federation of violating its sovereignty by firing a missile into Georgian territory. While Russia denied the charge, the

incident serves as a reminder of the potential for armed clashes where unresolved conflicts exist.

Concern obviously continues in the Balkans where lingering tensions from past conflicts could reignite, especially though not exclusively surrounding the future of Kosovo. Elsewhere in the OSCE region so-called “frozen conflicts” have real life consequences for those living in these areas. Too often these vulnerable populations are manipulated by outside forces determined to prolong instability for their own gain, or perceived advantage. Not surprisingly these areas are typically the breeding grounds for corruption and a whole range of criminal activity, including trafficking in arms, drugs, and humans, resulting in vested interests threatened by the prospects of resolution.

Meanwhile, Russian rhetoric and actions elsewhere seem more like a throwback to a bygone era when Soviet missiles and bombers targeted western capitals. In a revealing step, the Kremlin has called into question the CFE Treaty, in part a way of diverting attention away from the fact the Russian soldiers remain on the ground in Georgia and Moldova in contravention of commitments and timeframes for withdrawal agreed at the Istanbul OSCE summit in 1999.

I am pleased that the OSCE will reaffirm its commitment to combating terrorism at the upcoming Madrid Ministerial. Counter terrorism remains an urgent priority of the OSCE, as reflected in the OSCE Strategy to Address Threats to Security and Stability in the Twenty-First Century, adopted at the Maastricht Ministerial in 2003, and the OSCE Charter on Preventing and Combating Terrorism. The terrorist bombings in the hearts of Madrid and London added impetus to OSCE participating States' efforts to improve information sharing, policing and judicial cooperation to combat terrorism in the region. Measures to curtail the movement of terrorists across borders, improve travel document and transportation security, including shipping containers, and interrupt terrorist financing have been instituted across the region.

These and other initiatives in the security dimension deserve our attention as they have implications for U.S. interests in Europe and here at home. It should be clear that to the extent we work closely with our OSCE partners to apprehend terrorists before they can bring their deadly plans to fruition, to that extent we make all our homelands more secure.

Mr. Chairman, I welcome the opportunity to hear from the experts assembled from our own government as well as representatives of Georgia and Moldova, countries on the front line on many of these issues and concerns, and look forward to hearing their views on the efficacy of ongoing OSCE efforts and engagement to address these seemingly intractable problems.