

**U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations**  
**Senator Richard G. Lugar**  
**Opening Statement for Hearing on Kosovo**  
**March 4, 2008**

I join the Chairman in welcoming our distinguished witnesses.

The February 18 declaration of independence by Kosovo is an important step toward putting the violent and unstable history of the Balkans in the past, but our work there is not done. The United States and our allies must support the integration of Kosovo into international and Euro-Atlantic institutions. We must also be prepared to work closely with Serbia and assist with their goals of joining the European Union and engaging European institutions. In my view, lasting stability and security in Southeastern Europe requires the military, economic, and political integration of emerging democracies into existing European structures.

An international mission led by the European Union will take over from the United Nations as the leading civilian mission in Kosovo. The goal must be the creation of a functioning democracy and free market economy based on the rule of law. I am hopeful that the United States and the European Union have the infrastructure in place to secure a peaceful outcome in the region and to protect the minorities living in Kosovo, as well as their property and cultural heritage. We must not permit social unrest or inter-ethnic violence to reemerge in the Balkans. The trans-Atlantic community bears a special responsibility to prevent acts of violence such as those that occurred in 2004 when minorities were attacked and churches and homes were vandalized and burned.

This has been a difficult process for Serbia and the Serbian people, but this in no way justifies the events surrounding the attack on the U.S. embassy in Belgrade. The absence of significant Serbian security forces to protect international diplomatic facilities is inexcusable. The President and Prime Minister of Serbia are responsible for ensuring that the events of February 21 are never repeated.

Despite the events surrounding the attack on the U.S. Embassy, NATO and the European Union must stand ready to accelerate engagement and consider membership in trans-Atlantic institutions upon Belgrade's fulfillment of its obligations to the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. Serbia's entry into NATO's Partnership for Peace program was an important step.

The international community must remain committed to the full and complete implementation of the Ahtisaari Plan. United Nations Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari describes his proposal as "a foundation for a democratic and multi-ethnic Kosovo in which the rights and interests of all members of its communities are firmly guaranteed and protected by institutions based on the rule of law."

Last week I offered a resolution expressing the Senate's strong support for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to extend invitations for membership to Albania, Croatia, and Macedonia at the April 2008 Bucharest Summit. The so-called "Adriatic Three" will play an important role in preserving peace and stability in Southeastern Europe.

These three countries occupy critical geostrategic locations and are well-situated to deter efforts to destabilize the region through violence. NATO membership for these countries would continue to extend the zone of peace and stability into a critical region that has been encumbered by conflict.

I am hopeful the United States, NATO, and the European Union have the wisdom and endurance to see this process through to an outcome that contributes to the security of Europe and lifts a region and its people toward greater security and prosperity.

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