



For Immediate Release
Office of the Press Secretary
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President Bush Meets with Prime Minister Sanader of Croatia in Zagreb, Croatia

St. Mark's Square
Zagreb, Croatia

[In Focus: NATO](#)

10:49 A.M. (Local)

PRIME MINISTER SANADER: (As translated.) Mr. President, Mrs. Bush, ladies and gentlemen, distinguished guests. These are special days for Croatia. It is my pleasure to be able, in Zagreb, the capital of Croatia, to greet the President of the United States, George Bush, the leader of the country which has so strongly contributed to the realization of the dream of peaceful, democratic and free world.

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Mr. President, I'm addressing you in Croatian language, the language of our ancestors, many of whom found refuge and a way out of difficulties and injustice from this region in a then distant promised land in America. Their hands, also together with others, built and helped the realization of the American Dream.

When I look back today on Croatian and our dream on the life in a free, democratic country, on the life in ordered and civilized country, of equal citizens, of equal opportunities, then I see how it is precisely America, together with others, that helped for us to realize our dream, as well.



If I tell you that you are standing before the nation in which many grew up and matured with the names of the Voice of America, in those difficult, hostile times of communist dictatorship, I know you will know what I'm talking about. Our recent history taught us that we must believe in ourselves, rely on our forces. But we also learned that support from a friend is also important, especially when it comes at crucial moments. This is why, Mr. President, I want to thank you for the support and friendship.

Today, together with you and the free world, we share the same values of freedom, the right of the people and individuals to live in peace and security, values of democracy and human rights, values of dialogue and mutual respect. Our veterans fought for these values in the homeland war. In the defense of these values, more than 15,000 Croatian citizens died. With their memory in our hearts and our souls, today we express our gratitude to them.

And on these values, and on the recognition of mutual interest is where we base constant improvement of our relations and Croatian-American friendship, to the benefit of our peoples and our business communities. But also there are broader messages. On these values, the Euro-Atlantic community of freedom, peace, democracy and well-being continues to be built.

Ladies and gentlemen, we are coming from Bucharest, from the NATO summit. Croatia has made another large step in the realization of the most important goals of our state policy. Dear friends, with the invitation of our country to join NATO, and with the new energy in our negotiations to accede EU, this visit by American President means that the aspirations of many Croatian generations have been fulfilled.

Our citizens in this important success not only see the realization of goals of those brave patriots, our veterans who defended Croatia in the recent difficult times, but also the century-old-long aspirations of Croatians -- people

to go back to it to embrace a free democratic world. Our citizens also know that NATO today has supported the values they value and respect. Our negotiations with EU successfully leading to full membership in the next very brief period are also part of the same goal. In brief, Croatia is going where it belongs; Croatia is going back home. (Applause.)

Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen, the world is still not a totally secure place. Still in many ways, and for many ways, the fundamental civilization values which we share are threatened. They were attacked also on September 11th. They were attacked also in this region. Today they are still threatened in too many places across the world. The Euro-Atlantic community also has responsibility in the areas like Afghanistan and Darfur, but also in the resolution of the problems of diseases, poverty, disaster prevention, and other challenges for international security.



A common understanding of the new nature of global threats for world peace and security, and joint efforts to fight them are the only guarantee of the success, and the only way to continue to build the new international order, the order of cooperation instead of conflict, order of dialogue instead of separation.

You repeated in Bucharest the Cold War has ended. And a long demarcation line from Baltics to the area of our neighborhood and Black Sea and further, the people remember the horrible consequences of this period. We remember them here in Croatia, as well as our neighbors. This is why we especially care for the chance of finding unity, strengthening of new, unified Europe without demarcation lines.

The time in which alliances were against each other are gone. Today the times are where we look for allies along the same most -- the highest goals of human civilization, freedom and democracy. Not even peace in our neighborhood in southeast Europe is not full. Here still we need to invest in allies, freedom, democracy and equality. Euro-Atlantic integration of this is the most important, historically irreplaceable goal and incentive.

Croatia knew how to realize its future even when it seemed to be uncertain. Today we are at the threshold of Atlantic Alliance and European Union. The power of this success encourages us to continue to support our neighbors in their efforts. This is why we are very pleased to have with us the leaders of Albania, Macedonia, Presidents Bamir Topi and Branko Crvenkovski, Prime Ministers Sali Berisha and Nikola Gruevski.

The peoples in our southeast neighborhood also have the right to realize their aspirations. In Macedonia, our friends also have full rights for our support and encouragement. We will find the solution for Macedonia to join us soon in NATO Alliance.

In Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Croats, Bosniacs and Serbs have the right to live in peaceful, democratic European country in which all three peoples are coexisting, sovereign and equal.



In Montenegro, they have the right to incorporate their state goals in new Atlantic home. And in Kosovo, they have the right to live in a new democratic order which will protect minority communities and include them in public administration and political life.

Finally, ladies and gentlemen, Serbia, too, has the right to its place in Europe and the world. It's paid the price for its misdirected former politics, and not only has the right, but I'm convinced it will also demonstrate that it is ready for new future. This is why I repeat our neighbors don't give up. The inclusion of the entire Europe southeast into the Euro-Atlantic integration will continue. The time is for future. Our partners are with you.

Mr. President, when I recall your historic speech in Warsaw in 2001, which opened a window of freedom for many countries and peoples, when I see the achievements, when I see how much you still invest in the achievement of lasting peace and stability in southeast Europe, I'm filled with confidence. And I will personally continue to offer my contribution to high common goals of Croatia, U.S.A., Europe and all our most important partners.

Croatia will -- more and more in European Union and NATO, continue its responsible mission in southeast Europe. In matching goals of European Union and NATO, we see additional incentive and space for such action.

Once again, Mr. President, I thank you for your visit, for your support and for your friendship.

Ladies and gentlemen, dear friends, the President of the United States, George Bush. (Applause.)

PRESIDENT BUSH: Dobro Jutro. (Applause.) Mr. Prime Minister, thank you very much. I'm honored to be here with the leaders from Albania, Croatia, and Macedonia. The United States appreciates the leadership you have shown in the cause of freedom. We're pleased Albania and Croatia have been invited to join NATO. And we look forward to Macedonia taking its place very soon in this great alliance for freedom. (Applause.)

Laura, who has joined me today, and I are proud to stand on the soil of an independent Croatia. (Applause.) Our countries are separated by thousands of miles, but we're united by a deep belief in God and the blessings of liberty He gave us. And today, on the edge of the great Adriatic, we stand together as one free people. (Applause.)



Croatia is a very different place than it was just a decade ago. The Croatian people have overcome war and hardship to build peaceful relations with your neighbors, and to build a maturing democracy in one of the most beautiful countries on the face of the Earth. (Applause.) Americans admire your courage and admire your persistence. And we look forward to welcoming you as a partner in NATO.

The invitation to join NATO that Croatia and Albania received this week is a vote of confidence that you will continue to make necessary reforms and become strong contributors to our great Alliance. Henceforth, should any danger threaten your people, America and the NATO Alliance will stand with you, and no one will be able to take your freedom away. (Applause.)

I regret that NATO did not extend an invitation to Macedonia at this week's summit. Macedonia has made difficult reforms at home, and is making major contributions to NATO missions abroad. Unfortunately, Macedonia's invitation was delayed because of a dispute over its name. In Bucharest, NATO allies declared that as soon as this issue is resolved, Macedonia will be extended an invitation to join the Alliance. America's position is clear: Macedonia should take its place in NATO as soon as possible. (Applause.)

The NATO Alliance is open to all countries in the region. We welcome the decisions of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Montenegro to take the next steps toward membership called Intensive [sic] Dialogue. And we hope that soon a free and prosperous Serbia will find its rightful place in the family of Europe, and live at peace with its neighbors. (Applause.)

With the changes underway in this region, Europe stands on the threshold of a new and hopeful history. The ancient and costly rivalries that led to two world wars have fallen away. We've seen the burning desire for freedom melt even the Iron Curtain. We've witnessed the rise of strong and vibrant democracies and free and open markets. And today the people of Europe are closer than ever before to a dream shared by millions: A Europe that is whole, a Europe that is at peace, and a Europe that is free. (Applause.)

The people of this region know what the gift of liberty means. You know the death and destruction that can be caused by the followers of radical ideologies. You know that, in a long run, the only way to defeat a hateful ideology is to promote the hopeful alternative of human freedom. And that is what our nations are doing today in the Middle East. The lack of freedom and opportunity in that region has given aid and comfort to the lies and ambitions of violent extremists. Resentments that began on the streets of the Middle East have resulted in the killing innocent people across the world. A great danger clouds the future of all free men and women, and this danger sits at the doorstep of Europe.

Together the people of this region are helping to confront this danger. Today soldiers from Croatia, Albania, and Macedonia are serving bravely in Afghanistan -- helping the Afghan people defeat the terrorists and secure their future of liberty. Forces from Albania and Macedonia are serving in Iraq -- where they're helping the Iraqi people

build a society that rejects terror and lives in freedom. It's only a matter of time before freedom takes root across that troubled region. And when it does, millions will remember the people of your nation stood with them in their hour of need. (Applause.)

At this great moment in history, you have a vital role. There are many people who don't appear to understand why it takes so long to build a democracy. You can tell them how hard it is to put in place a new and complex system of government for the first time. There are those who actually wonder if people were better off under their old tyranny. You can tell them that freedom is the only real path to prosperity and security and peace. And there are those who ask whether the pain and sacrifices for freedom are worth the costs. And they should come to Croatia. And you can show them that freedom is worth fighting for. (Applause.)

The great church in this square has stood since the Middle Ages. Over the centuries, it has seen long, dark winters of occupation and tyranny and war. But the spring is here at last. This is an era in history that generations of Croatians have prayed for. It is an era that Pope John Paul the Second envisioned when he came to this land, and prayed with the Croatian people, and asked for "a culture of peace." Today in this square, before this great church, we can now proudly say: Those prayers have been answered. (Applause.)

(Turns to interpreter.) They can't hear you. Don't worry about it.

May you always remember the joy of this moment in your history. And may the hopeful story of a peaceful Croatia find its way to those in the world who live as slaves, and still await a joyful spring.

May God bless Croatia. And thank you for coming.

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