

Washington, DC

19 May 2008

The Honorable Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, Secretary-General
The North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NATO Headquarters
Boulevard Leopold III
1110 Brussels, Belgium

via electronic means

Invitation to the Republic of Macedonia to join NATO

Dear Secretary General:

As twenty European and American senior diplomats, academics, and international officials with long service in and on the Balkans, we are deeply concerned about the prospects for the Republic of Macedonia to join NATO.

We understand and appreciate the Alliance's commitment at Bucharest, provided in paragraph 20 of the Summit Declaration, effectively acknowledging that Macedonia has fulfilled the criteria for entry. We also note, however, that this paragraph appears to make an Alliance invitation to Macedonia contingent upon its coming to terms with Greece over the country's name. If true, this requirement would appear to be at variance with Greece's commitment under the 1995 Interim Accord not to block Macedonia's accession, provided the latter is referred to as "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia."

Given the rejection by Greece of the UN mediator's compromise proposal to resolve the name dispute, "Republic of Macedonia (Skopje)", made after intensive consultations with the parties in the run-up to the Bucharest Summit, we are concerned that no satisfactory solution will be found in time to meet the July deadline for Macedonia to keep pace with its Adriatic Charter colleagues, Albania and Croatia.

It is our view that continuing to protract Macedonia's entry to NATO could have serious consequences for that country's stability and for its neighbor, Kosovo. We believe that the converse is equally true; that issuing Macedonia a prompt invitation to membership would send a most welcome signal of reassurance to all parties in Macedonia who are cooperating in good faith to maintain that country's multiethnic character. A NATO invitation would simultaneously send a timely and necessary signal of caution to all those in and outside the region who would like to keep open the question of final borders in Macedonia, Kosovo or elsewhere in the region.

In short, whatever the Alliance decides to do with respect to Macedonia's invitation could have some impact on regional stability. As you know, the foundation of the international strategy for South-East Europe rests on Euro-Atlantic integration. Any interruption in the path toward NATO or EU membership by a deserving would-be member presents a serious complication for that strategy, and sends a most disconcerting message to the region.

After fifteen years of mediation, the issues and obstacles to the Greek dispute over Macedonia's name are well-known. Identity issues have plagued the region since the violent break up of former Yugoslavia began in the early 1990s. NATO played a crucial role in averting major conflict in Macedonia in 2001. A key component of the Ohrid Peace Agreement was the painful concessions to the Albanian minority on identity. Mounting more pressure on the Macedonians to make additional concessions on their identity could be counter-productive.

The answer to the dispute over Macedonia's name lies in fair and reasonable compromise by both sides along the lines proposed by the UN mediator on the eve of Bucharest. We write you confident that you will work maximally to that end with all Alliance members and candidate countries in support of the UN mediation process.

Thank you for your consideration. Please accept the assurances of our highest consideration.

Signed*:

Ambassador Mort Abramowitz, former Assistant Secretary of State
Washington, DC

Ambassador Robert M. Beecroft, former Head of Mission, OSCE Mission to Bosnia-Herzegovina,
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Ambassador Daan Everts, former Head of Mission, OSCE Mission to Kosovo
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Ambassador Robert W. Farrand, former Brcko Supervisor and Deputy High-Representative in Bosnia-
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Ambassador Robert S. Gelbard, former US Special Representative of the President for the Balkans
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* Verification of authorization to sign this letter can be obtained by contacting edwardpjoseph@gmail.com. This PDF file, dated 19 May 2008, is genuine and authentic.

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