

Administration of Barack H. Obama, 2009

Remarks to the North Atlantic Council in Strasbourg, France

April 4, 2009

Thank you so much. I want to address my remarks directly to the delegation from Albania and Croatia and their leadership: Welcome to NATO. We are very excited about your participation. The Atlantic alliance is 60 years old, and it's a measure of our vitality that we are still welcoming new members.

I think it's important to point out that both Croatia and Albania have already done many significant things on behalf of the alliance, including the 140 Albanians and 296 Croatian troops who have served in Afghanistan. And I think that indicates the degree to which they will be strong contributors to the alliance.

To both countries, your large contributions—your proportionally large contributions to NATO's joint efforts show what a priority you've made this, and we are grateful for it. And we are proud to have you as allies.

Congratulations, as well, on the progress that you've made in difficult reforms that have brought you to this point. Both countries have achieved an extraordinary amount, and continuing along this path will help you bring—will help you become even closer to Euro-Atlantic integration.

I'd also like to note that as we welcome Albania and Croatia to NATO, this will not be the last time that we have such a celebration, and I look forward to the day when we can welcome Macedonia to the alliance. The door to membership will remain open for other countries that meet NATO's standards and can make a meaningful contribution to allied security.

Now, I would like to invite the Secretary General as well as the Presidents of Albania and Croatia to join me. We have the original treaty that has been archived in the United States, but we also have two duplicates that we would like to present to the Presidents of each country, so if you could join me at this table.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:49 a.m. at the Palais de la Musique et des Congres. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary General Jakob Gijsbert "Jaap" de Hoop Scheffer of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization; President Bamir Topi of Albania; and President Stjepan Mesic of Croatia.

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Names: de Hoop Scheffer, Jakob Gijsbert "Jaap"; Mesic, Stjepan; Topi, Bamir.

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