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REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
IN BUCHAREST, ROMANIA

National Bank of Savings
Bucharest, Romania

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you all. Thank you, and good morning. I appreciate former Presidents Iliescu and Constantinescu for joining us today. I want to thank the President of Latvia and Mrs. Zatlere for joining us. Secretary Rice, ambassadors, members of the United States Congress, the President of the National Bank of Savings, members of the German Marshall Fund and the Atlantic Council, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen -- Bună Ziua.

Laura and I are pleased to be back in Bucharest. The last time we were here, we stood with the people of this city in Revolution Square for a rally celebrating Romania's invitation to join NATO. Tens of thousands came out in the rain to rejoice in this achievement, and revel in the promise that, henceforth, no one would ever take Romania's freedom away. It was a moment I'll never forget. President Iliescu introduced me in the midst of the drizzling rain. And then the clouds parted, and a rainbow appeared in the sky -- heralding a new day for this nation, and the Atlantic Alliance she was about to join.

Since then, Romania has made strong contributions to the Alliance. Romanian soldiers have brought courage to NATO's missions. Romanian leaders have brought moral clarity to NATO's deliberations. And today, the Romanian people have brought their famous hospitality to this NATO summit. Laura and I are thrilled to join you for this historic occasion. And the American people are honored to call Romania a friend, an ally, and a partner in the cause of peace.

This is my final NATO summit. The coming days will be a time for hard work, as allies make important decisions regarding the expansion, and the missions, and the capabilities of NATO. The coming days will also be a time of reflection -- a chance to look back on how far we have come in the past seven years and what this tells us about the challenges ahead.

In June 2001, I came to Europe and spoke to students and faculty at Warsaw University. I reaffirmed America's commitment to a united Europe, bound to the United States by ties of history and trade and friendship. I said that Europe must overturn the bitter legacy of Yalta, and remove the false boundaries that had divided the continent for too long. I declared that "all of Europe's new democracies, from the Baltic to the Black Sea, should have the same chance for security and freedom -- and the same chance to join the institutions of Europe."

I spoke those words on the soil of a nation on the Baltic. Today, a nation on the Black Sea is where I have come to say those words have been fulfilled. The NATO Alliance that meets here this week now stretches from the shores of Klaipeda to the beaches of Neptun. And here in Bucharest, we will extend the circle of freedom even further, by expanding the NATO Alliance to include new members from the Balkans.

A decade -- the Balkans was a region wracked by war and fanaticism and ethnic cleansing. Today, it is a region growing in liberty and tolerance and peace. These changes are the result of determined actions by NATO, and the courageous choices by new Balkan leaders who have worked to overcome the violence and divisions of the past. In recognition of their progress, tomorrow NATO will make an historic decision on the admission of three Balkan nations: Croatia, Albania, and Macedonia. The United States strongly supports inviting these nations to join NATO. These countries have walked the difficult path of reform and built thriving free societies. They are ready to contribute to NATO -- and their citizens deserve the security that NATO brings.

As we welcome new NATO allies, we also affirm that the door to NATO membership remains open to other nations that seek it -- in the Balkans and beyond. So at this summit, we will also decide whether to accept the requests of two other Balkan nations, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Montenegro, to begin an Intensified Dialogue with NATO. It's a major step on the road to NATO membership, and it is a step that America fully supports for these two nations. And at our summit tomorrow, we'll also make clear that the door to closer cooperation with NATO is open to Serbia, as well.

This week, our Alliance must also decide how to respond to the requests by Georgia and Ukraine to participate in NATO's Membership Action Plan. These two nations inspired the world with their Rose and Orange Revolutions -- and now they're working to consolidate their democratic gains and cement their independence. Welcoming them into the NATO [sic] -- into the Membership Action Plan would send a signal to their citizens that if they continue on the path to democracy and reform they will be welcomed into the institutions of Europe. It would send a signal throughout the region that these two nations are, and will remain, sovereign and independent states.

Here in Bucharest, we must make clear that NATO welcomes the aspirations of Georgia and Ukraine for their membership in NATO and offers

them a clear path forward to meet that goal. So my country's position is clear: NATO should welcome Georgia and Ukraine into the Membership Action Plan. And NATO membership must remain open to all of Europe's democracies that seek it, and are ready to share in the responsibilities of NATO membership.

The most important responsibility of NATO is the collective security of our citizens. On my 2001 visit to Warsaw, I said that the United States and Europe "share more than an Alliance -- we share a civilization." Less than three months later, that shared civilization came under a monstrous attack. Even now, with the distance of time, it's still difficult to fathom the enormity of what happened on September the 11th, 2001. Thousands of men and women woke up that morning, had breakfast with their families, and left for work -- never to return home. Tens of thousands more -- including citizens of many NATO nations -- still mourn the loss of moms and dads, husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, friends and loved ones, who were taken from them in a horrific moment of violence and death.

NATO nations recognize that the attacks were part of a broader ideological struggle. The terrorists who struck America that day murder the innocent in pursuit of a violent political vision. They despise the principles of decency and humanity that are the very foundation of our Alliance. They want to impose their brutal rule on millions across the world. They attack our countries and target our people because we stand for freedom -- and because we hold the power to stop them from achieving their murderous ambitions.

NATO nations recognized that this unprecedented attack required unprecedented action. For the first time in the history of the Alliance, Article Five of the NATO Treaty was invoked. NATO aircraft were soon flying over the United States to provide early warning in case of a follow-on attack. Many NATO nations -- including the United Kingdom and France, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Norway, the Netherlands, Italy, and Turkey -- deployed forces to fight the terrorists in Afghanistan and to drive the Taliban from power.

Since then, NATO's role in Afghanistan has expanded significantly. In 2003, NATO took over the International Security Assistance Force. And over time, this NATO mission has grown from a small force operating only in Kabul to a force of 47,000 that is now leading operations across all of Afghanistan. Afghanistan is the most daring and ambition [sic] mission in the history of NATO. An Alliance that never fired a shot in the Cold War is now leading the fight on a key battleground of the first war in the 21st century. In Afghanistan, forces from NATO and many partner nations are bringing honor to their uniforms and pride to their countries.

As NATO forces fight the terrorists in Afghanistan they're helping Afghans take increasing responsibility for their own security. With NATO's help, the ranks of trained Afghan soldiers have grown from 33,000 last year to 55,000 today -- and these brave Afghan forces are leading many important combat operations.

Thanks to their courage, and the skill of NATO personnel, a nation that was once a safe haven for al Qaeda is now a democracy where boys and girls are going to school, new roads and hospitals are being built, and people are looking to the future with new hope.

Afghanistan still faces many difficult challenges. The enemy has been driven from its strongholds, and no longer controls a single Afghan city. But as this enemy has been defeated on the battlefield, they have turned increasingly to terrorist tactics such as suicide attacks and roadside bombs. And if we were to let up the pressure, the extremists would re-establish safe havens across the country, and use them to terrorize the people of Afghanistan and threaten our own. And that is why we'll stay on the offense, and that is why we'll keep the pressures on these radicals and extremists, and that is why we'll succeed.

Terrorists used safe havens in Afghanistan to launch the 9/11 attacks. Since 9/11, al Qaeda terrorists around the world have succeeded in launching devastating attacks on allied cities such as Madrid and London and Istanbul. They planned more attacks on targets in Europe that never came to pass because of the vigilance of intelligence and law enforcement personnel from many of our nations. For example, in 2006 we stopped an al Qaeda plot to blow up passenger jets departing Europe for the United States. Earlier this year, Turkish authorities broke up an al Qaeda cell that was plotting a series of terrorist attacks in Turkey. This enemy remains dangerous. And that's why our Alliance is so important to protecting innocent people.

Two weeks ago, Osama bin Laden issued an audio recording in which he threatened Europe with new attacks. We need to take the words of the enemy seriously. The terrorist threat is real, it is deadly, and defeating this enemy is the top priority of NATO.

Our Alliance must maintain its resolve and finish the fight in NATO [sic]. As President Sarkozy put it in London last week, "We cannot afford to lose Afghanistan. Whatever the cost, however difficult the victory, we cannot afford it. We must win." I agree completely. To ensure that we do win, France is sending additional forces to Afghanistan. The United States is deploying an additional 3,500 Marines. Romania is adding forces, as are several other allies. We ask other NATO nations to step forward with additional forces, as well. If we do not defeat the terrorists in Afghanistan, we will face them on our own soil. Innocent civilians in Europe and North America will pay the price.

The struggle in Afghanistan cannot be won by force of arms alone. We must also help the Afghan government strengthen democratic institutions, provide essential services, create jobs and opportunity, and show its people that freedom can lead to a better life. But for this to happen, Afghanistan needs security -- and that is what NATO is helping to provide.

Many NATO allies are also helping to bring security and stability to the other major front in this war against extremists and radicals -- Iraq. At this moment, 10 NATO nations have forces supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom -- including the "Black Wolves" of Romania's 151st Infantry. This battalion has given their base in Iraq a fearsome name: "Camp Dracula." Romanian troops are operating unmanned aerial vehicles, protecting critical infrastructure, conducting human intelligence missions, providing medical care, and carrying out combat operations in Iraq.

One Romanian soldier put it this way: "I've been here before and will come back for as many times as needed. I know that what we do is important." Our Romanian allies are serving the cause of freedom in Iraq with skill and honor -- and they have earned the respect of my countrymen.

Forces from 14 NATO nations plus Ukraine are also serving in Iraq as part of a NATO training mission. NATO has trained more than 7,000 Iraqi officers so far. The Iraqis have asked us to expand this mission, and we should do so. At our summit this week, we will also expand the NATO-Iraq partnership so we can allow more Iraqi officers to attend NATO schools and seminars. The purpose is to prepare Iraqi officers to lead their own troops in battle, so we can help them defend their democracy against the terrorists and extremists who murder their people.

Iraqi forces are fighting bravely in this struggle, and they're risking and giving their lives in the fight against our common enemies. To help them prevail, last year the United States launched the surge in Iraq. We deployed 30,000 additional soldiers and Marines, with a clear mission: Help Iraqi forces protect the people, pursue the enemy in its strongholds, and deny the terrorists sanctuary. The government in Baghdad has stepped forward with a surge of its own, adding more than 100,000 new Iraqi soldiers and police during the past year. And to ensure that military progress in Iraq is quickly followed up with real improvements in daily life, we doubled the number of provincial reconstruction teams in Iraq. These teams are helping to build up local economies and strengthen responsible leaders and help bring Iraqis together so that reconciliation can happen from the ground up.

The surge has produced results across Iraq. Compared to a year ago, violence is significantly down, civilian deaths are down, sectarian killings are down, and attacks on coalition forces are down. We've captured or killed thousands of extremists in Iraq, including hundreds of key al Qaeda leaders and operatives. With security improving, local citizens have restarted the political process in their neighborhoods and their cities and provinces -- and leaders in Baghdad are beginning to make the tough compromises necessary to get important pieces of legislation passed.

As they do, we will stay on the offense against the enemy. In the north, Iraqi forces backed by American troops are pursuing al Qaeda terrorists who are

operating in and around Mosul. In the south, Prime Minister Maliki sent the Iraqi security forces to begin to root out extremists and criminals in Basra -- many of whom have received arms and training and funding from Iran. In retaliation, some of these extremist elements fired rockets into the center of Baghdad hoping to shake Prime Minister Maliki's will. They're not going to succeed. There's tough fighting ahead, but the gains from the surge we have seen are real. And working together with Iraqi forces, our coalition continue to pursue our enemies and seal their defeat.

The surge has done more than turn the situation around in Iraq -- it has opened the door to a major strategic victory in the broader war against extremists. In Iraq, we're witnessing the first large-scale Arab uprising against Osama bin Laden and his grim ideology and his terrorist network. Tens of thousands of ordinary citizens have stepped forward to join the fight against al Qaeda. And when Iraqi and coalition forces defeat this enemy, the effects will reverberate beyond Iraq's borders.

By defeating the enemy in Iraq, we will show people across the Middle East that millions share their revulsion of terrorists' hateful ideology. We will show that free men and women can stand up to the terrorists and prevail against them. We will show that America will not abandon our friends in the fight against terror and extremism. We will show that a hopeful vision of liberty can take root in a troubled region and yield the peace that we all desire. And we will show that the future of the Middle East does not belong to terror -- the future of the Middle East belongs to freedom.

As NATO allies fight terror and promote progress in Iraq and Afghanistan, our Alliance is taking on other important missions across the world. In the Mediterranean, NATO forces are patrolling the high seas to combat terrorism as part of Operation Active Endeavor. In Kosovo, NATO forces are providing security and helping a new democracy take root in the Balkans. In Darfur, NATO has airlifted African Union peacekeepers and provided them with training to protect the people of that troubled region. The Alliance stands ready to provide further assistance to the AU-African Union force. Each of these missions underscores the changing nature of the NATO Alliance. See, NATO is no longer a static alliance focused on defending Europe from a Soviet tank invasion. It is now an expeditionary alliance that is sending its forces across the world to help secure a future of freedom and peace for millions.

To meet the missions of the 21st century, NATO needs 21st century capabilities. So over the past seven years we've taken decisive action to transform the capabilities of this Alliance. We created a new NATO Transformation Command to ensure that NATO is preparing for the threats of the future. We created a new NATO Response Force, to ensure that our Alliance can deploy rapidly and effectively anywhere in the world. We launched a new Strategic Airlift Initiative to ensure that NATO members have a dedicated fleet of aircraft their forces need to deploy and sustain themselves over great distances.

We've created a new NATO special operations coordinator -- coordination center in Belgium to increase the interoperability and effectiveness of our special forces.

One of the most important steps we can take is to protect our -- to protect our citizens is the deployment of new capabilities to defend against a ballistic missile attack. On 9/11, we saw the damage our enemies could do by hijacking planes loaded with jet fuel, turning them into missiles and using them to strike innocent people. Today, dangerous regimes are pursuing far more powerful capabilities, and building ballistic missiles that could allow them to deliver the world's most dangerous weapons to capitals of free nations.

To defend against this emerging threat, the United States has deployed missile defenses in the Pacific that can protect against threats emanating from Northeast Asia. And we're now deploying elements of this system to Europe, so we can defend against possible attacks emanating from the Middle East.

The need for missile defense in Europe is real, and in my opinion, it is urgent. Iran is pursuing technology that could be used to produce nuclear weapons, and ballistic missiles of increasing range that could deliver them. In 2006, Iran conducted military exercises in which it launched ballistic missiles capable of striking Israel and Turkey. Iranian officials have declared that they are developing missiles with a range of 1,200 miles, which would give them the capability to reach us right here in Romania. Our intelligence community assesses that, with continued foreign assistance, Iran could test an intercontinental ballistic missile capable of reaching the United States and all of Europe if it should choose to do so.

Today we have no way to defend Europe against such an emerging threat -- so we must deploy ballistic missile defenses that can help protect. The United States is working with Poland and the Czech Republic to deploy a system that could defend countries in Europe from a limited, long-range attack from the Middle East. We're working with NATO on developing allied capabilities to defend against short- and medium-range attacks from the Middle East. And as we do so, we're inviting Russia to join us in this cooperative effort so as to be able to defend Russia, Europe, and the United States against an emerging threat that could affect us all.

President Putin has raised the possibility of using radar facilities in Azerbaijan and southern Russia. We believe these sites could be included as part of a wider threat monitoring system that could lead to an unprecedented level of strategic cooperation between Russia and the NATO Alliance. We can only imagine the devastation that would be caused by a ballistic missile attack on one of our cities. So I believe strongly we have a responsibility to work together to ensure that such attack never comes to pass.

This week President Putin is planning to attend his first NATO summit, and later this week I plan to travel to Sochi, Russia, for further talks on this and other matters. In our discussions, I will reiterate that the missile defense capabilities we are developing are not designed to defend against Russia -- just as the new NATO we are building is not designed to defend against Russia. The Cold War is over. Russia is not our enemy. We're working toward a new security relationship with Russia whose foundation does not rest on the prospect of mutual annihilation.

In Warsaw seven years ago, I said that the Europe we envision must be open to Russia. During my presidency, we've acted to make that vision a reality. With our allies, we created the NATO-Russia Council to facilitate greater cooperation between Russia and the Atlantic Alliance. The United States and Russia signed the Moscow Treaty which commits our two nations to historic reductions in our operationally deployed strategic nuclear warheads. And as we look to the future, I believe we can build strong relations with Russia and a strong NATO Alliance at the same time.

Building a strong NATO Alliance also requires a strong European defense capacity. So at this summit, I will encourage our European partners to increase their defense investments to support both NATO and EU operations. America believes if Europeans invest in their own defense, they will also be stronger and more capable when we deploy together.

I have confidence that NATO is ready for the challenges of the 21st century because I have confidence in the courage of allies like Romania. The Romanian people have seen evil in their midst -- and they've seen evil defeated. They value freedom because they've lived without it. And this hard experience has inspired them to fight and sacrifice for the liberty of others.

That is precisely what Romanian forces are doing on behalf of this Alliance. We see their courage in soldiers like Second Lieutenant Aurel Marcu of Romania's 33rd Mountain Battalion. Last fall, Aurel's unit was in Afghanistan when it got word that an American soldiers -- American soldiers from the Arizona National Guard had been struck by a roadside bomb. Several were injured, one of them fatally. Aurel and his comrades swung into action, and responded to the call for assistance. As his unit sped to the scene of the attack, Aurel's vehicle was struck by a second roadside bomb, killing him instantly. Aurel gave his life rushing to the aid of wounded American soldiers. His example and his valor are an inspiration to all of us. I very much appreciate his wife joining us today, and I want her to know that she and her family have the gratitude and the respect and the prayers of the American people.

Our troops are proud to fight alongside allies like this. We appreciate courage. We appreciate people who love freedom. We appreciate people who understand freedom will yield the peace that we all want. We value our friendship with Romania -- and we value the Atlantic Alliance that we share.

America is united with our European allies by ties of blood that our soldiers have shed together. We're united by ties of conviction -- a shared belief that every human life is precious and endowed by our Creator with dignity and worth. We're united by ties of liberty, and by an abiding faith in the power of freedom to change the course of history. Strengthened by these convictions, tested in battle, and confident in our future, this great Alliance for freedom is ready for all that will come.

Thank you for your time. God bless.