

visa law. And all they—although they changed the law, it still creates certain hurdles for nations like Romania. And I assured the President that we will work with him as best as we can to adhere to our law and to, at the same time, understands the contradictions.

It's—hopefully, the new law will—and our cooperation—will make it easier for Romanian citizens to come and visit their relatives. And obviously, to the extent that somebody tries to come and not come back is something we all got to guard about. That's—but the idea of somebody coming to visit a relative or a long-lost cousin to say hello and to see what America is like and then come back to Romania is an issue that we just got to be thoughtful about.

And so yes, I mean, this is—this subject came up. It is clear there's a level of frustration. I explained our new law is in effect, and we'll work closely with the Romanian Government to meet our law and, at the same time, meet the demands of a strong and good ally.

Thank you. Thank you very much.

President Basescu. Thank you very much.

President Bush. Right, you want to go over here?

President Basescu. Just a moment.

President Bush. Oh, you got—

President Basescu. Just a moment.

President Bush. He's not through.

President Basescu. The information I would like to add to refer to two delicate issues, issues that are visible for the Romanian public. We have also approached—we have also addressed the visa issue and also the Teo Peter issue. And we hope to find, in time, the decision taken by President Bush was that, in the near future, we will launch the bilateral mechanism that—apart from the European ones. And referring to the other issue, to find as fast as possible a reasonable solution acceptable for the family of Teo Peter.

Thank you.

President Bush. He's going to show me this wharf out here. [*Laughter*]

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 1:40 p.m. at the Protocol Villas Neptun-Olimp. In his remarks, he referred to Maria Basescu, wife of President Basescu; President Nicolas Sarkozy of France; and President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia. President Basescu and some reporters spoke partly in Romanian, and those portions of their remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Remarks Following a Discussion With Secretary General Jakob Gijsbert “Jaap” de Hoop Scheffer of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in Bucharest, Romania

April 2, 2008

President Bush. Thank you for your time, and thank you for organizing the Bucharest summit. I appreciate your service very much to the cause of world peace, and I want to thank you for your briefing. I'm, like you, optimistic that this is going to be a very successful summit.

We came in with some objectives in mind. One was to get NATO to continue to support Afghanistan's democracy. And I

feel good about what I'm hearing from my fellow leaders about their desire to support Afghanistan. And I think if tomorrow we get clarification on troop support, I think the people of Afghanistan—the way you indicated it may be—the people of Afghanistan are going to be more than grateful. And the people who—whose nations are represented in NATO will be supporting a cause that is worthy, a cause for peace.

Secondly, you and I discussed the need for a comprehensive missile defense regime out of NATO. And it looks like to me that the ingredients are coming together where that could be a distinct possibility. And that would be a very important statement because NATO could assure its members and the people within NATO that there will be defenses available to prevent a Middle Eastern nation, for example, from launching a strike which could harm our security.

We've also talked obviously about enlargement. And we'll see, on enlargement. There's an issue with one country, in particular, but it look—I'm optimistic that this will get solved. And finally, of course, Ukraine and Georgia is a very difficult issue for some nations here; it's not for me. I think that these nations are qualified nations to apply for membership application. And I said so on Ukrainian soil. I also said so in the Oval Office with the President of Georgia. And I haven't changed my mind, because it's—one of the great things about NATO is it encourages the kind of habits that are necessary for peace to exist.

And today in a press conference, I was asked, Mr. Secretary General, about Russia's reactions. I said—I have always told Vladimir Putin, my friend—that it's in his interest that there be democracies on her border, and that he doesn't need to fear NATO; he ought to welcome NATO because NATO is a group of nations dedicated to peace. And so I appreciate your hard work, and I'm excited about tomorrow's—about tonight's meeting and tomorrow's meetings as well.

Secretary General de Hoop Scheffer. Mr. President, thank you for having us and your Afghanistan position. I can share your and echo your optimism, I think, on NATO's key operational priority, which is Afghanistan. We will do well. We will do well in the political sense because we will publish a vision document, as we call it, which is a clear sign of our commitments not only of NATO but of the whole international community; long-term commitment vis-a-vis

Afghanistan, which is important for them, for the Afghan people, but is also important for the reason that said we should not forget that we are on one of the frontlines in a fight against terrorism in Afghanistan. And that is a major argument and a major reason that we cannot afford not to prevail. And we are prevailing in Afghanistan. So I think that's good news. And President Karzai, to whom I spoke this morning, re-confirms that good news.

I'm optimistic about enlargement, Mr. President. I think that enlarging the NATO family of democratic nations, this value-based organization, is a plus. And I hope that tomorrow will see invitations.

I also hope that we'll see a positive and constructive meeting with the—President Putin and the NATO-Russia Council, with the right tone and the right ambition for practical cooperation.

I'm like you, Mr. President, optimism about—optimistic about missile defense. I think the alliance will take a clear position on missile defense, recognizing the threat and working on the answers to that recognized threat.

And last but not least, Mr. President, you mentioned another issue which readily will be discussed: Membership Action Plan for Ukraine and Georgia. I think this can never be a question of "whether." The "whether" is not questionable. If these nations fulfill the criteria and if they would enter—want to enter themselves through NATO's open door, I think that door should be open. So that is a discussion that certainly—we certainly are going to have.

We have a large agenda; we have a full agenda. It will be not only NATO's biggest summit ever, but it will also be a very interesting political summit with, I think, very good results.

Mr. President, once again, thank you for having us.

President Bush. Thank you, sir.

Secretary General de Hoop Scheffer. Thank you.

President Bush. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:15 p.m. at the JW Marriott Bucharest Grand Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to President Mikheil Saakashvili of Georgia; and President Vladi-

mir V. Putin of Russia. Secretary General de Hoop Scheffer referred to President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan.

Remarks at a North Atlantic Council Summit Meeting in Bucharest *April 3, 2008*

President Bush. Mr. Secretary General, President Basescu, thank you all very much. For nearly six decades, the NATO alliance has been the hope of a world moving toward freedom and justice and away from patterns of conflict and fear. During times of great challenge, we have advanced our ideals. We've stood firm in defending them—firm in defending them, and we have offered NATO's promise to nations willing to undertake the hard work and sacrifices required of its members.

Since the end of the cold war, NATO has welcomed 10 liberated nations to its ranks. These countries have brought new ideas, new enthusiasm, and new vigor. NATO's embrace of these new members has made Europe stronger, safer, and freer. These countries have made our alliance more relevant to the dangers we confront in the new century.

In Bucharest, we're inviting more nations to join us. I'm pleased that the alliance has agreed to invite Albania and Croatia to become members of NATO. Both these nations have demonstrated the ability and the willingness to provide strong and enduring contributions to NATO. Both have undertaken challenging political, economic, and defense reforms. Both have deployed their forces on NATO missions. Albania and Croatia are ready for the responsibility NATO brings, and they will make outstanding members of this alliance.

We regret that we were not able to reach consensus today to invite Macedonia to join the alliance. Macedonia has made difficult reforms at home. It is making major con-

tributions to NATO missions all—abroad. The name issue needs to be resolved quickly so that Macedonia can be welcomed into NATO as soon as possible. In the interim, NATO needs to intensify its engagement with Macedonia to make sure that NATO looks forward to the day when Macedonia takes its place among the members of the Atlantic alliance.

Albania, Croatia, and Macedonia all know the difference between good and evil, because they clearly remember evil's face. These nations do not take their freedom for granted, because they still remember life without it. These nations respect the hard work of building democracy, because they brought it to life in their countries.

The United States and all members of the alliance strongly support the aspirations of their people, and we pledge to stand with them as they continue to work on reform. Together, we will continue to help build a Europe that is stable, strong, and free. We'll bring more stability to a once troubled Balkan region. We will be able to demonstrate the benefits that come from siding with the forces of freedom.

NATO's door must remain open to other nations in Europe that share our love for liberty and demonstrate a commitment to reform and seek to strengthen their ties with the transatlantic community. We must give other nations seeking membership a full and fair hearing. As we invite new members today, we're also clear that the progress of enlargement will continue.

The alliance has always welcomed those willing to make the sacrifices necessary to