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honored to be here with you. Thank you for coming out to say hello.

This is a great day in the history of Lithuania, in the history of the Baltics, in the history of NATO, and in the history of freedom. The countries of NATO have opened the doors of our Alliance to Lithuania and six other European democracies. And I have the honor of sharing this message with you: We proudly invite Lithuania to join us in NATO, the great Atlantic Alliance.

Many doubted that freedom would come to this country, but the United States always recognized an independent Lithuania. We knew that this continent would not remain divided. We knew that arbitrary lines drawn by dictators would be erased, and those lines are now gone. No more Munichs. No more Yaltas. The long night of fear, uncertainty, and loneliness is over. You're joining the strong and growing family of NATO. Our Alliance has made a solemn pledge of protection, and anyone who would choose Lithuania as an enemy has also made an enemy of the United States of America. In the face of aggression, the brave people of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia will never again stand alone.

Audience members. *Aciu! Aciu! Aciu!*

The President. You're welcome. [*Laughter*] You are needed in the NATO Alliance. You will contribute to our common security. Yet the strength of NATO does not only depend on the might of armies but on the character of men and women.

We must be willing to stand in the face of evil, to have the courage to always face danger. The people of the Baltic states have shown these qualities to the world. You have known cruel oppression and withstood it. You were held captive by an empire, and you outlived it. And because you have paid its cost, you know the value of human freedom.

Lithuania today is true to its best traditions of democracy and tolerance and religious liberty, and you have earned the respect of my Nation and all nations.

Our Alliance of freedom is being tested again by new and terrible dangers. Like the Nazis and the Communists before them, the terrorists seek to end lives and control all life. And like the Nazis and the Communists before them, they will be opposed by free nations, and the terrorists will be defeated.

Over a decade ago, hundreds of thousands of Lithuanians, Latvians, and Estonians joined hands, from Talin to Vilnius, to show your love for freedom. Near Cathedral Square is a stone commemorating that struggle. Inscribed on that stone is one word: Miracle. The recent history of the Baltic states truly is a miracle. You've gained your freedom. You have won your independence. You now join a great Alliance, and your miracle goes on.

Today on this great day, may God bless the memory of Lithuanian patriots and freedom fighters who did not live to see this moment. And may God always bless the brave and the free people of Lithuania.

Thank you for coming today. May God bless freedom.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:20 a.m. in Rotuse Square. In his remarks, he referred to President Valdas Adamkus of Lithuania, who introduced the President; President Vaira Vike-Freiberga of Latvia; and President Arnold Ruutel of Estonia.

Remarks on Receiving the Star of Romania in Bucharest, Romania

November 23, 2002

Mr. President, thank you so much for this honor. I accept the Star of Romania on behalf of my country, and I appreciate the spirit of friendship that this award represents.

I want to thank the Prime Minister and members of your Government for such fine hospitality.

Laura and I are honored to be here, and so is my Cabinet—members of my Cabinet, as well as senior members of my staff. We're here because America and the nations of the world have seen the courage and character of the Romanian people. You have liberated yourselves from tyranny. You're building a vibrant democracy. And you're preparing to join NATO. In all these events of history, America has been your friend, and we'll be proud to call you Ally.

Mr. President, Romania and America share common values and common challenges. We will join together to open markets, to build a new relationship with Russia, to confront global terrorism, and to stop the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Europe and America face unprecedented dangers to our security, and we will face these dangers together.

The Romanian people have made a great effort to meet the standards of NATO membership. That effort is succeeding. America respects all that you have done and all that you will do in the cause of freedom. And America will be your partner in continuing the work of reform.

On behalf of the American people, I proudly affirm the close relationship between our countries, and I thank you for the honor of this award. May God bless Romania.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:47 p.m. at Cotroceni Palace. In his remarks, he referred to President Ion Iliescu and Prime Minister Adrian Nastase of Romania.

Remarks to the People of Romania in Bucharest

November 23, 2002

Salut! Thank you all. Thank you, Mr. President. Thank you for being out here in the rain. Thank you for such a warm welcome. Laura and I are honored to be in this great country. As we started speaking, a rainbow appeared. God is smiling on us today.

I'm proud to stand in this great square and to bring the good wishes of the American people. Today we reaffirm the friendship between your country and mine. I'm honored to carry a message to the people of Romania: We proudly invite you to join NATO, the great alliance of freedom.

All around us are reminders of Romania's history and the culture we share. Close by is a church, three centuries old, a symbol of the faith that overcomes all oppression. In this square we see monuments of Romanian patriots who lost their lives in liberty—for the liberty of your nation. And here, in December of 1989, you broke the silence of your captivity. From that balcony, the dictator heard your voices and faltered and fled. Two generations of bitter tyranny ended, and all the world witnessed the courage of Romania, the courage that set you free.

Since those days of liberation, Romania has made an historic journey. Instead of hatred, you have chosen tolerance. Instead of destructive rivalry with your neighbors, you have chosen reconciliation. Instead of state control, you have chosen free markets and rule of law. And instead of dictatorship, you have built a proud and working democracy.

The path of freedom you've chosen is not easy, but it's the only path worth taking. I know that your hardship did not end with your oppression. America respects your labor, your patience, your daily determination to find a better life. Your effort has been recognized by an offer to NATO membership. We welcome Romania into NATO.

NATO's invitation to join was also a vote of confidence that you will continue the hard work of political, economic, and military reform. And as you do, you will have partners in all the nations of NATO. The promises of our Alliance are sacred, and we will keep our pledges to all the nations that join us. Should any danger threaten Romania—should any nation threaten Romania, the United States of America and NATO will be by your side. As a NATO Ally, you can have this confidence: No one will be able to take away the freedom of your country.

NATO membership will make Romania more secure, and Romania will add to the strength of the NATO Alliance as we face unprecedented new dangers. Already, our troops are serving side by side in Afghanistan. Already, Romania has joined the global coalition against terror. And we thank you very much.

The world has suffered enough from fanatics who seek to impose their will through fear and murder. The NATO Alliance and the civilized world are confronting the new enemies of freedom, and we will prevail.

Your country also brings moral clarity to our NATO Alliance. You value freedom because you have lived without it. You know the difference between good and evil because you have seen evil's face. The people of Romania understand that aggressive dictators cannot be appeased or ignored; they must always be opposed.