



EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES

SKOPJE • MACEDONIA



United States House of Representatives Delegation to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly

February 22, 2008
Army Hall

Congressman John Tanner: I am very delighted to be here in Macedonia this morning along with my colleagues who are the Committee from the U.S. Congress, our delegates from the U.S. NATO Parliamentary Assembly. We are here on a visit because of this critical times in this critical part of the world to let the people of Macedonia, both the political leadership and the military leadership know that we in the U.S. Congress are highly supportive of the aspirations of Macedonia for NATO membership. We recognize in the Congress the great progress that has been made along a number of issues, along a number of lines that the Membership Action Plan has, from military to anti-corruption, to governance issues, to all of the things that go into the application for NATO membership and we wanted to come by and say we are aware in Congress of the fact that you here in Macedonia have made great progress, and urge you to continue even harder, if possible, to do that because it will benefit all of us concerned. We wanted to come here to the military because we know of the helicopter loss of eleven lives. We also understand and realize the commitment that your countrymen have made to help in this new world of terrorism, with your deployment in Afghanistan and Iraq. This again is something why we wanted to come by and say “thank you,” “we appreciate it,” “we support it,” and “we deeply appreciate your friendship.”

Irina Gelevska, A1 television: According to your opinion, what are the odds of Greek blocking Macedonia’s membership to NATO? Do you expect this to happen at the forthcoming Summit in Bucharest?

Congressman John Tanner: As you know NATO is a consensus organization, and we are here to show our support for your aspirations to NATO, we are not the only voter as you know, but we wanted to come and evaluate for ourselves, get a first hand look at what is happening here in Macedonia, meeting with the President, the Prime Minister and now with the military, and we will take the report back. So, we are not here to make judgments but to encourage continued progress along all of the fronts, and then see what happens. We in the U.S. support the aspirations that you have for NATO membership.

Isak Ramadani, VOA Albanian: Congressman, are you content with the number of troops that Macedonia, Albania and Croatia, as part of the Adriatic Charter, have sent to missions in Iraq and Afghanistan, or should they send more troops?

Congressman John Tanner: As I have said, we recognize the size of the Army, we recognize the commitment that the citizens, your countrymen are making to their defense budget. It is meeting NATO guidelines so we are very encouraged from our conversations here with both the political and military leadership. The training that must go on, I know as you do, the Macedonians have charge of security at headquarters in Afghanistan so it is something that not only should you be proud of as a contribution to the civilized world and what we are all faced with. There's no different threat because we have different countries. The threat is the same when someone is willing to blow themselves up to injure or kill innocent people. So, the threat, no matter where one is, is the same and the number of troops supplied is appreciated, no matter how many.

Irina Gelevska, A1 television: How do you see yesterday's events in Belgrade, the attack on the U.S. embassy, and can you comment on the situation in Kosovo?

Congressman John Tanner: The recent events in Kosovo I think point out to the fact that the NATO framework is something that many member nations, or many potential member nations, ought to aspire to and work toward from the security standpoint, as well as all of the other good things that come with it: good governance, free markets, political freedom and so on. We are encouraged that there is interest in and aspirations for membership in NATO in this region of the world. We will have bumps along the way but Macedonia can be a leader in this entire region and is playing a very valuable and very constructive role in trying to avoid the violence we saw in this part of the world almost 20 years ago. We don't want that to happen again, and as we see countries in this part of the world striving to meet the NATO Membership Plan, we believe good things will happen for us all and particularly those of you who live here. Thank you

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