

113TH CONGRESS
2^D SESSION

H. RES. 491

Affirming the support of the United States for Georgia's accession to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

FEBRUARY 26, 2014

Mr. POE of Texas (for himself and Mr. KEATING) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs

RESOLUTION

Affirming the support of the United States for Georgia's accession to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

Whereas successive United States Administrations have supported Georgia's aspirations to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO);

Whereas the Government of Georgia has met the basic standards for accession, even as specific reforms continue, and has consistently displayed its willingness and ability to meet the responsibilities of membership in NATO;

Whereas Georgia's defense spending, as roughly 2.5 percent of GDP, is a half point higher than the baseline 2 percent target set by NATO, which only the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Greece, Turkey, and Estonia currently meet;

Whereas it was declared by the Heads of State and Government participating in the 2008 NATO Summit in Bucharest, and reaffirmed in 2009 at the Summit in Strasbourg and Kehl, in 2010 at the Summit in Lisbon, and in 2012 at the summit in Chicago, that Georgia will become a member of NATO;

Whereas the United States-Georgia Charter on Strategic Partnership, signed in January 2009, outlines the importance of the bilateral relationship as well as the intent of both countries to expand democracy and economic programs, enhance defense and security cooperation, further trade and energy cooperation, and build people-to-people cultural exchanges;

Whereas the United States-Georgia Charter on Strategic Partnership pledges both sides to “strengthen Georgia’s candidacy for NATO membership”, and to work within the framework of the NATO-Georgia Commission “to pursue a structured plan to increase interoperability and coordination of capabilities between NATO and Georgia, including via enhanced training and equipment for Georgian forces”;

Whereas the European Union (EU)-Georgia Association Agreement, initialed in late November 2013 and expected to be signed before fall 2014, opens new opportunities of political association and deeper economic integration with the EU;

Whereas the creation of a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area is an integral part of the EU-Georgia Association Agreement, which aims to gradually integrate Georgia into the EU’s internal market;

Whereas the ongoing EU-Georgia Visa Dialogue and the Visa Liberalization Action Plan, being implemented by Georgia, aim at introducing the visa-free regime between the EU and Georgia in a secure and well-managed environment;

Whereas Vice President Joseph Biden stated in Tbilisi in July 2009 that the United States “will not recognize Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states”;

Whereas Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton stated in Tbilisi on July 5, 2010, that, “we continue to call for Russia to abide by the August 2008 ceasefire commitment . . . including ending the occupation and withdrawing Russian troops from South Ossetia and Abkhazia to their pre-conflict positions”;

Whereas in October 2010, at the meeting of the United States-Georgia Strategic Partnership Commission, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton stated, “the United States will not waver in its support for Georgia’s sovereignty and territorial integrity”;

Whereas the White House released a Fact Sheet on July 24, 2010, calling for “Russia to end its occupation of the Georgian territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia . . .” and for “a return of international observers to the two occupied regions of Georgia”;

Whereas Human Rights Watch concluded in its 2011 World Report that “Russia continued to exercise effective control over South Ossetia and Abkhazia, preventing international observers’ access and veto in international missions working there”;

Whereas the Senate of the 112th United States Congress adopted a resolution (S. Res. 175) in July 2011 affirm-

ing the United States support for the sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of the country of Georgia, and calling upon Russia to remove its occupying forces from Abkhazia and South Ossetia;

Whereas the House of Representatives of the 112th United States Congress adopted a resolution (H. Res. 526) in September 2012 affirming support for the sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of Georgia and the inviolability of its borders, and recognizing Abkhazia and South Ossetia as regions of Georgia illegally occupied by the Russian Federation;

Whereas the August 2008 military conflict between Russia and Georgia resulted in civilian and military casualties, the violation of Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and increased the number of internally displaced persons;

Whereas the August 12, 2008, ceasefire agreement negotiated by the European Union Presidency and agreed to by the Presidents of Georgia and the Russian Federation, provides that all Russian troops shall be withdrawn to preconflict positions;

Whereas Georgia in 2010 made a unilateral pledge not to use force against Russia or Georgia's Russian-occupied territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and reiterated that pledge in a unanimous parliamentary resolution in 2013;

Whereas since 1993, the territorial integrity of Georgia has been reaffirmed by the international community in 36 United Nations Security Council resolutions;

Whereas Russia continues to erect physical barriers along the Administrative Boundary Lines of the occupied Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, where Russian

troops continue to be stationed despite a commitment in the 2008 ceasefire agreement to withdraw to preconflict positions;

Whereas Russia has not reciprocated to Georgia's unilateral pledges for non-use of force;

Whereas the United States supports Georgia's independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity within the internationally recognized borders of Georgia;

Whereas at the April 15, 2011, meeting in Berlin, Germany, between the Georgian foreign minister and foreign ministers of NATO, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton stated, "U.S. support for Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity remains steadfast . . . We share Georgian concerns regarding recent Russian activities that can negatively affect regional stability";

Whereas the North Atlantic Council Foreign Ministers, meeting on December 7, 2011, applauded the significant operational support provided to NATO by aspirant partners Georgia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, and Bosnia and Herzegovina;

Whereas Vice President Joseph Biden stated in Munich on February 2, 2014, that "there is unfinished business in our common project of a Europe whole and free. Georgia and the states of the Balkans have unfulfilled aspirations for Euro-Atlantic integration. The pace of these integration efforts will be determined by the aspirants themselves. But we too share a responsibility for helping them achieve their rightful place in Europe and the Transatlantic Alliance.";

Whereas the Government of Georgia, beginning with the Rose Revolution of 2003, has taken significant steps toward

promoting democratic, judicial, and economic reforms and has indicated its intent to continue to make progress in these areas;

Whereas Georgia has initiated positive developments and commitments in the areas of constitutional reforms, strengthening the role of Parliament, and utilizing international election organizations and transparency;

Whereas the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, other international observers, and the United States indicated that Georgia's October 2013 Presidential election met international standards;

Whereas international observers have hailed Georgia's October 2012 parliamentary elections as competitive and complimented the country's leaders for conducting a democratic vote;

Whereas Secretary of State John Kerry said in May 2013, "We remain committed to Georgia's territorial integrity and sovereignty within its internationally recognized borders, and to the continued strengthening of Georgia's democratic institutions . . . and we continue to support Georgia's integration into the Euro-Atlantic community";

Whereas recognizing that members of NATO share a common adherence to democratic norms, Georgia can best prepare itself for membership by progressing on its democratic reform agenda;

Whereas, H. Res. 526 of September 2012 also expresses support for Georgia's NATO membership aspirations and to advance further implementation of decisions taken by the allies at the NATO Summits in Bucharest, Strasbourg and Kehl, and Lisbon with regard to Georgia's NATO membership;

Whereas, during the NATO Military Committee (MC) visit to Georgia on February 11, 2014, and February 12, 2014, General Knud Bartels, Chairman of the NATO MC emphasized Georgia's significant progress in achieving its ambitious defense reforms; expressed the Committee's "strong support" for the reforms and its confidence that the "transformation is comprehensive, solid and irreversible", also noting that "The NATO Military Committee strongly supports these reforms and looks forward to strengthening military cooperation, both in terms of operational engagements and interoperability in order to maintain the beneficial partnership we have built throughout the years.";

Whereas Georgia has been a reliable partner and ally in enhancing global peace and stability with its contribution to operations in Iraq and Afghanistan;

Whereas in Iraq, thousands of Georgian forces helped guard the Iraqi side of the Iraq-Iran border, having redeployed from the safety of the Green Zone to accept this dangerous mission;

Whereas in Afghanistan, Georgia has contributed troops to the NATO-International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission since 2004, and engaged in combat operations in Helmand province side-by-side with the United States Marines;

Whereas Georgia has been the largest non-NATO troop contributor and the fifth largest troop contributor overall, serving without any national caveats;

Whereas, despite the heavy casualties, Georgia is committed to remain in the NATO ISAF until the end of the mis-

sion and stands ready to continue its significant contribution to the NATO's post-ISAF missions in Afghanistan;

Whereas Georgia remains committed to provide full transit capacity in support of the United States and coalition troops in Afghanistan;

Whereas NATO agreed to include Georgia in the NATO Response Force in 2015;

Whereas Georgia expressed its intent to participate in EU and United Nations-led crisis management and stabilization missions;

Whereas the United States rejects the long-outdated notion of the spheres of influence and strongly stands by the principle that sovereign democracies are free in their decision and choice of their own partnerships and alliances;

Whereas Georgia has sought to strengthen its economic and political ties with NATO countries; and

Whereas the United States has long supported the European aspirations of Georgia: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the House of Representatives—

2 (1) supports Georgia's aspirations to join the
3 North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO);

4 (2) recognizes the significant benefits of closer
5 economic and political ties between NATO members
6 and Georgia which will spur economic growth,
7 strengthen democratic institutions and norms, and
8 bolster the rule of law in the South Caucasus region
9 as well as other countries in Eastern Europe;

1 (3) calls on the Government of Russia to re-
2 spect the rights of countries to make their own sov-
3 ereign choices with regard to international partner-
4 ships, including to join NATO;

5 (4) urges the Administration and the United
6 States Department of State to continue to work
7 closely with Georgia to support its entry into NATO;

8 (5) acknowledges and supports the progress
9 made by Georgia in the NATO membership process;
10 and

11 (6) urges NATO members to extend a Member-
12 ship Action Plan (MAP) to Georgia at the NATO
13 Summit in the United Kingdom in September 2014.

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