

Immediate Release - 4/3/08

NFCA is Gratified that Croatia is Invited to Become a Full Member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

Washington, D.C. - The National Federation of Croatian Americans (NFCA) is gratified to see the Republic of Croatia finally rewarded for the many military, economic, and constitutional reforms it implemented in qualifying for the invitation received today from the NATO Alliance members meeting this week in Bucharest, Romania.

Full NATO membership has been a top priority of the NFCA over many years in support of Croatia's top foreign policy goal for the country. Alliance members were unanimously in favor of extending the invitation for Croatia to join this important multilateral security organization.

Membership for Croatia will now have to be ratified by the parliaments of the NATO member countries and in Croatia's Sabor. In the United States, treaty votes take place in the U. S. Senate, and the NFCA will be forthright in its continued proactive support for legislative approval there. If unanimous ratification results, Croatia's induction into NATO as a full member will likely take place at the 2009 NATO Conference now scheduled to be in Berlin, Germany, in celebration of the 60th anniversary of the Alliance. The work of the NFCA and its members over the next year will primarily be directed at the U. S. Senate to ensure that this important ratification takes place.

Croatia's joining NATO will improve stability and security in the region, on the continent of Europe, and throughout the world. It also presents an opportunity to the Croatian people for the peace and prosperity enjoyed by other NATO Alliance members. In addition, future potential aggressors on Croatian soil will have significant cause for concern pursuant to Article V of NATO's charter. That Article views an attack on one NATO member as an attack on all NATO members. Never in its history has Croatia had such formidable defensive protection.

The NFCA, on behalf of the Croatian American community, has worked tirelessly with the U. S. Government, particularly the Departments of State and Defense, to help ensure that no obstacles of concern would stand in the way of this invitation. Along the way, the NFCA participated in the formation of the Congressional Croatian Caucus and assisted in the development and promotion of Congressional Resolutions that commended Croatia's progress toward satisfying the many requirements necessary to join the NATO organization. The NFCA produced numerous supporting documents for key Congressional Members and their staffs and attended important meetings with U.S. Executive

branch officials to help promote a positive view of Croatia's progress toward western ideals and her desire to be a strong partner with the United States. NFCA President Ed Andrus said: "Today, all Croatian Americans can rejoice in this accomplishment! Membership in the NATO Alliance with all of its attendant benefits, is a reward that Croatia richly deserves. It will have profound implications for Croatia and her people for the foreseeable future."

There are many that the NFCA would like to recognize for the important contributions that they made towards the achievement of this important goal for the Republic of Croatia. Special thanks must go to U. S. Ambassador Robert A. Bradtke for the guidance he has provided Croatia in helping her position for this day. Our thanks go to the Co-chairs of the Congressional Croatian Caucus, Congressmen George Radanovich and Peter Visclosky, for their leadership and support for Croatia in the U.S. House of Representatives. We also thank U.S. Senators George Voinovich, Richard Lugar, and Joe Biden as well as U.S. Representatives Elton Gallegly and Robert Wexler and their expert staffs for their bold legislative statements, creative resolutions, and other initiatives supportive of Croatia. The NFCA must sincerely thank President Bush for keeping his promise "to lead the charge for Croatia at the 2008 Summit".

NFCA President Andrus added: "My personal thanks go out to our volunteer workers, members, and friends who have faithfully supported our activities over many years. The NFCA could not have provided as much assistance in Washington and elsewhere as it did without the sincere dedication and continued support of its membership across the US. Thank you all for your support! And, congratulations to the Republic of Croatia!"

The NFCA is a national umbrella organization of Croatian American groups that collectively represents approximately 130,000 members.