



# U.S.-MONTENEGRIN POLICY FORUM

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## MONTENEGRO SEEKS DIRECT TIES WITH NATO

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As the clock continues to tick towards a national referendum on Montenegro's independence, the government in Podgorica is seeking closer ties with NATO. More direct security links could improve NATO's operations, as well as better prepare Montenegro for meeting the challenges that NATO membership will entail.

Unfortunately, Montenegro remains hamstrung by both NATO's indecision and by the constraints of the artificial Union with Serbia. Belgrade's policies in particular, both toward Montenegro and toward NATO, are retarding the process of inclusion in the Partnership for Peace (PfP) program and delaying eventual Alliance membership for both quasi-states.

Podgorica has adopted a clear stance toward NATO. It believes that the security of the wider West Balkan region can only be completed when Montenegro and Serbia join NATO. Serbia's position is more ambiguous and its views on Alliance membership do not coincide with its Union partner. Moreover, it still harbors lingering resentment over NATO's limited air war against Milosevic's forces in 1999.

Podgorica fully supports the immediate and unconditional fulfillment of all requirements presented to Serbia-Montenegro in order to join PfP. This includes cooperation with The Hague tribunal and the rapid dispatch of indicted war criminals to the court. Montenegro also seeks an urgent restructuring and modernization of the armed forces and complete civilian control over the military.

Serbia, by contrast, continues to experience conflicts between civil and military leaders amidst charges that senior military figures are obstructing reform and hiding indicted war criminal General Ratko Mladic. Even the Foreign Minister of Serbia-Montenegro, Vuk Draskovic, has accused the military leadership of interference in national politics and holding Serbia hostage by protecting war

criminals. Former Serbian Prime Minister Zoran Zivkovic has gone even further by asserting that "the army is running the country," and that General Aco Tomic is the power behind Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica.

The Montenegrin government has taken the initiative to accelerate military reform and streamline Union forces, but its efforts have been thwarted by vested interests in Belgrade. For example, Montenegro has pushed for the abolition of military courts and the transfer of powers to civilian bodies and wants to have an equal say in the formulation of a common Strategy of Defense.

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In effect, Montenegro is not only held back from the EU by Serbia's political instability and the slow pace of reform, but it is being obstructed from NATO by its Union with Serbia. The aspiring state has been pointedly neglected by Brussels as NATO's senior representatives have failed to visit Podgorica and thereby have ignored the supposed equality between the two republics.

It is in NATO's interest to develop a direct channel of communication and cooperation with an emerging state that is seemingly committed to the Alliance. For instance, there needs to be more involvement of Montenegrin representatives in training, seminars, workshops and other activities organized by NATO bodies. Podgorica also seeks to establish a Coast Guard in order to enhance its security and conduct more effective anti-criminal and anti-terrorist interdiction in the Adriatic. NATO can be extremely helpful in providing training and equipment in an endeavor that will be advantageous for the Alliance itself.

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Montenegro is now in the process of formulating and adopting its own distinct National Security Doctrine that will outline the threats and challenges to national security and the strategies to overcome them. Ultimately, both Montenegro and NATO will benefit when the new state becomes a direct participant in the Alliance.

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## RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

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After months of negotiations and several postponements, the defense strategy of Serbia-Montenegro was adopted on 18 December by the Union's parliament. The document will provide a basis for the army's downsizing and reorganization with the aim of improving mobility. While the military remains a joint institution, the defense strategy allows for its possible division should the two states gain independence. Further negotiations between Belgrade and Podgorica are still pending regarding the process of passing legislation in each republic needed to implement the strategy.



On 6 December, Montenegro opened a tender for selecting a financial advisor for the sale of its *Podgoricka Banka*, expected to be completed by the end of 2005. Both foreign and domestic consultants are eligible to apply, provided that they fulfill the requirements in terms of experience in Central and Eastern Europe. The deadline for placing bids for the advisory position is 30 December, while privatization is planned for April 2005. *Podgoricka Banka's* total assets are estimated at \$71 million.



Serbia-Montenegro President Svetozar Marovic last week received a new death threat due to his support for cooperation with The Hague tribunal – the third in less than a month. The warning also targeted Serbian President Boris Tadic and Rasim Ljajic, the head of the country's special committee for cooperation with the U.N. court.



On 7 December, Montenegrin President Filip Vujanovic expressed his hope that Podgorica and Belgrade

would reach an agreement on a better political arrangement than the current dysfunctional state union. "We have the possibility to put together an ideal model, while the possibility of being together in a non-functioning union, which worries me, will cost much and unsettle our good relations," Vujanovic told Radio Montenegro. He pointed out that the Serbia-Montenegro Assembly has still not approved a credit of 18 million euros intended for Montenegro. Vujanovic asserted that re-defining relations between the two states is the only viable option for Euro-Atlantic integration and for reaching an agreement on cooperation with The Hague tribunal.



Montenegrin Prime Minister Milo Djukanovic held a meeting in Brussels on 8 December with Javier Solana, the EU's foreign policy and security chief, and assured him that restructuring relations between Serbia and Montenegro would not jeopardize the region's security and political stability. Serbia could attain its European goal faster if it concentrated on its internal democratic transformation rather than wasting resources on the current Union.



On 10 December, the U.S. Consulate in Podgorica provided Montenegro with \$133,000 worth of equipment to improve border and customs control. The donation is part of a projected \$3 million for the next two years. In line with the same plan, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security is providing training to Montenegro's Interior Ministry and funding infrastructure projects at several border crossings. The initiative aims to curb organized crime and trafficking in the region.



The Montenegrin government adopted an action plan for the implementation of the recommendations from the European partnership. According to Minister of European Integration and Foreign Economic Relations Gordana Djurovic, the document is in line with the EU two-track model and specifies the obligations of Montenegro, Serbia, and those of the state union.



*The U.S.-Montenegrin Policy Forum Briefing* is produced by the CSIS Eastern Europe Project. This publication is compiled and edited by Janusz Bugajski, Director; Ilona Teleki, Fellow; Milena Staneva, Research Assistant; and Spencer Jones, Research Intern. For more information, please contact the CSIS Eastern Europe Project at [EastEuropeProject@csis.org](mailto:EastEuropeProject@csis.org) or (202) 887-0200 Ext. 3398. CSIS does not take specific policy positions. Accordingly, all views, positions, and conclusions expressed in this publication should be understood to be solely those of the authors.

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