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**JOINT PRESS POINT WITH NATO SECRETARY GENERAL JENS STOLTENBERG AND THE  
PRIME MINISTER OF MONTENEGRO, DUŠKO MARKOVIĆ**

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Prime Minister Markovic, welcome to NATO Headquarters. Its great to have you here. Its great to see you again, but I especially welcome the fact that Im able to welcome you here at NATO headquarters and to congratulate you on your appointment as Prime Minister of Montenegro.

I would also like to thank you Montenegro for contributing in many different ways to our shared security, to NATOs different activities and NATOs missions. In doing so, you are helping to build security far beyond our own borders. And Im grateful for your contribution.

You are contributing troops to our presence in Afghanistan. You are helping to fund the Afghan National Security Forces.

And you also last year hosted an important civil emergency exercise for NATO Allies and Partners in Montenegro.

And soon we will launch a new NATO Trust Fund in Montenegro to destroy surplus ammunition, and to help keep people safe in a very concrete way.

So these are just a few examples of how Montenegro and NATO already work very closely together and how we in different ways contribute to our shared security.

Then of course I am looking forward to take that cooperation to a new level when Montenegro becomes a full member of the Alliance. And Montenegro is on the right track to join the Alliance in the very near future.

Your path towards NATO membership has been remarkable □ just ten years after regaining your independence. You have been able to reach very far with the signing of the Accession Protocol last year. And the process of ratification is on its way in the different Allied countries.

The ratification process of the Accession Protocol is now in the final stages.

Once all Allies have ratified the Protocol, Montenegro will be invited to accede to the Washington Treaty.

And you, Montenegro, will become the 29th member of the most successful military Alliance in history - the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation - NATO.

This is a clear example of NATO's commitment to the Open Door Policy.

And an important step forward in realising our vision of a Europe whole, free, and at peace.

As ratification proceeds, I encourage you to continue to work on necessary reforms.

Including strengthening the rule of law and fighting corruption and organised crime.

NATO membership is a very significant step forward.

It means sharing the benefits and the responsibilities of collective defence.

NATO membership will strengthen Montenegro's sovereignty.

Montenegro will be part of a unique family of nations, based on shared values.

You will take part in every decision taken by NATO.

You will have equal say with every other country around the table, no matter how big or how small.

And your NATO membership will send a clear signal of stability and security in the whole region, which is the basis for prosperity.

So Prime Minister Markovic, thank you once again. I look forward to working with you in the months and years ahead.

And I look forward to welcoming your country as NATO's newest member in the very near future. So once again, welcome to NATO Headquarters.

OANA LUNGESCU [NATO Spokesperson]: We have just a few minutes well start with Montenegro TV.

Q: First Mr. Stoltenberg one question for you. Is, after the American Administration has been established recently how do you think that the process of the ratification of Montenegro and accession protocol will go on further?

JENS STOLTENBERG (NATO Secretary General): I'm confident that the accession protocol will be ratified by the Senate. It has already passed the Foreign Relations Committee and it has strong bipartisan support so I have no reason to not believe that that will also be the case in the Senate. So what we have seen is that so far 21 countries have ratified the accession protocol. Today we expect France, the French Senate to ratify the accession protocol so then it will be 22 countries and we expect the others to follow but of course it's up to every national Parliament to decide exactly when they do it but I expect all Parliaments including the U.S. Senate to do it so Montenegro can become a full member in the near future.

OANA LUNGESCU: Wall Street Journal.

Q: A question to both the Prime Minister and then another question to the Secretary General. Prime Minister, are you at all concerned about the delay in ratification in the U.S.? Obviously it has made it through the Committee but the full Senate hasn't taken it up. Are you worried at all that Mr. Trump will weigh in negatively on ratification? And to the Secretary General, Mr. Trump yesterday said torture works. Is torture consistent with Alliance, is torture inconsistent with

alliance values or are interrogation methods a matter for national governments to decide, not the Alliance?

DUSKO MARKOVIC (Prime Minister of Montenegro): INTERPRETER: I wish to tell you that we are not worried when it comes to the ratification of the protocol by the U.S. at all. As Mr. Stoltenberg has said important procedures have been completed already by the U.S. Senate and especially the Committee. And as you know - as you heard we have full support for this ratification at the U.S. Senate. And I would say that this tension having to do with the U.S. ratification is much encouraged by those that are against it. However we are sure, absolutely certain that it will take place very soon and on our side as Montenegrin government we continue preparing ourselves to further respect our obligations having to do with membership.

JENS STOLTENBERG: What I can tell you is that all NATO operations are always conducted in accordance with international law and that has been the case for all our different military operations over many years and that is the policy of NATO and that will remain the policy of NATO.

OANA LUNGESCU: Thank you very much. That's all we have time for. Thank you.

JENS STOLTENBERG: Thank you.

[http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions\\_140399.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_140399.htm)

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