

NATO Membership Sought in Serbia

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Serbia is set to establish a permanent post at the NATO headquarters by June while the Atlantic Council of Serbia, officially an NGO, urged Serbia to join NATO.

Head of the Serbian Defense Ministry's Public Relations Department Petar Boskovic announced Monday that Serbia is going to establish a mission to NATO by June.

Boskovic said that the mission is part of Serbia's participation in the Partnership for Peace program.

He said that the mission has been delayed several times due to "technical" reasons. Boskovic also said that Serbia is not taking the full advantage of what this NATO program has to offer.

Branislav Milinkovic has been Serbia's special representative to NATO since 2004 and it is expected that he becomes the first Serbian ambassador to NATO.

Atlantic Council of Serbia has expressed an opinion that NATO membership would be good for Serbia because it would enhance security in the region and bring in foreign investment.

In a lecture held on Monday that was organized by the Atlantic Council of Serbia, the participants said that "it would be best for Serbia to join NATO, as that would help ensure the security of the state, but also attract foreign investments," reports Serbia's news agency Tanjug.

Czech Defense Attaché Jan Wykowski told the participants that the "security guarantees which NATO membership provides was the main reason why the Czech Republic decided to join the organization" and added that "that NATO membership made it possible for the Czech Republic to become a stable, democratic and foreseeable country, which, as he put it, is also important in terms of foreign investments."

NATO Secretary General recently expresses an opinion that Bosnian Serb entity should be extinguished.

In 1999, NATO bombed Serbia over its attempts to quash an ethnic Albanian separatist violence in Kosovo. Serbia marked the 11th anniversary of that bombing that has facilitated massive ethnic cleansing of Serbs, destruction of Serbian heritage, confiscation of Serbian property in the province and violation of Serbia's sovereignty.

Slovak participant to the lecture, Frantisek Kasicky, noted that NATO membership is good because it is a "proof of sovereignty" that provides security guarantees that provided "assistance on the EU pathway, cooperation with the world's best armed forces, opening of

new possibilities for Slovakia's industry, creation of security environment for investments and possibility for participation in peace-keeping operations."

Norwegian Defense Attaché Terje Haverstaad said that along with security guarantees, NATO membership also offers the possibility of technical development, as one of the most important prerequisites for building a strong army.

The lecture was also attended by the defense attaches of Austria and Sweden who are not in NATO.

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