

Bush speaks of troops, NATO expansion

by UPI

BUCHAREST, Romania -- The NATO alliance must "finish the fight in Afghanistan," U.S. President George Bush said Wednesday in remarks opening a NATO summit in Romania. The alliance "must maintain its resolve and finish the fight in Afghanistan," Bush said in remarks prepared for delivery in Bucharest. Besides additional military troops, NATO allies must help the Afghan government provide essential services, create job opportunities and strengthen democratic institutions, he said. Bush also touched on a U.S. plan to install a ballistic missile defense system in Europe, as well as push for a beginning of the membership process for Ukraine and Georgia. The system would help defend Europe from attack from the Middle East, Bush said. Russia had expressed security concerns. "(We) are inviting Russia to join us in this cooperative effort to defend Russia, Europe, and the United States against an emerging threat that could affect us all," Bush said. Bush spoke of Ukraine and Georgia's application to participate in NATO's Membership Action Plan, a years-long blueprint for membership. Bush also called on the alliance to add Albania, Croatia and Macedonia to its membership. Georgia and Ukraine "are working to consolidate their democratic gains and cement their independence," Bush said.

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