

NATO Afghan troop commitment grows

by UPI

BUCHAREST, Romania -- NATO members revealed their troop commitments for Afghanistan and discussed the alliance's expansion when the NATO summit in Romania convened. France said it was sending a battalion of troops to eastern Afghanistan so U.S. Marines could be redeployed to the south, Voice of America reported Thursday. Canada has the largest NATO contingent in the troubled south and has threatened to withdraw if reinforcements weren't sent. In a speech Wednesday, U.S. President George Bush described the Afghanistan mission's success as crucial in the fight against terrorism. NATO officials say there is consensus that this mission must succeed. Member countries lack consensus about Georgia and Ukraine's applications to begin the process for NATO membership. An alliance spokesman said the requests won't get the required unanimous vote during the Bucharest summit. Russia opposes allowing the one-time Soviet republics into the alliance, while France and Germany said they don't believe the time is right to admit the two countries to the lengthy membership process. Albania and Croatia will receive formal invitations to join the alliance. NATO members also agreed that Macedonia meets the criteria for membership but Greece vowed to block approval because of a name dispute.

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