Mr. Speaker, I yield myself

such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that there was

a time when we could honestly hope

that Russia was playing a fair and supportive

role with regard to the resolution

of the separatist conflicts in the

Republic of Georgia. Unfortunately,

our optimism in that regard is almost

exhausted. It now appears obvious that

Russia seeks to play a destabilizing

role in Georgia, with the goal of undermining

Georgia’s political and economic

development and, ultimately, its

own sovereignty.

Over several years Russia has reportedly

supported the separatist forces

with arms and trained personnel. It has

applied boycotts on Georgian goods and

shut off energy supplies to Georgia. It

has broadly granted Russian citizenship

and issued Russian passports to

people living in Georgia’s separatist regions.

It has provided economic subsidies

to the separatist regions and

granted residents of those regions the

right to vote in Russian elections. Its

so-called ‘‘peacekeeping’’ forces in the

separatist regions appeared to have

played a biased role in favor, of course,

of the separatist regime. More recently,

on April 16, the Kremlin issued

a decree further expanding its ‘‘official’’

ties with the separatist regions.

Most objective observers would affirm

that the Georgian Government

has tried to be fair and open-minded in

its efforts to negotiate a settlement in

the separatist conflicts. One has to

wonder, however, if sporadic and mysterious

incidents involving small-scale

attacks on Georgian territory and

forces are meant to provoke the Georgian

Government.

One such incident occurred on April

20. An unmanned and unarmed Georgian

reconnaissance aircraft was shot

down over Georgian territory, reportedly

by a Russian MIG–29 fighter. Since

neither Georgia nor the separatist regimes

have MIG–29 jets among their

forces, it seems difficult for Russia to

deny its involvement.

Mr. Speaker, the Georgian people

have made tremendous progress since

the ‘‘Rose Revolution’’ of 2003. Georgia

is not a perfect democracy, but it’s

heading in the right direction. It certainly

compares very well with the

trends in Russia, where a totalitarian

regime is steadily being constructed

once again.

Georgia deserves the support and encouragement

of leading states of Europe

and the support of the United

States. Democracy and reform in Georgia

will only succeed if the European

Union, the leading states of Europe,

and the United States remain engaged

and strongly support it.

The resolution calls for the Kremlin

to immediately revoke its decision to

expand ‘‘official ties’’ with the separatist

regions in Georgia. The resolution

expresses strong support for the

restoration of the territorial integrity

of Georgia and for the peaceful resolution

of conflicts within Georgia’s borders.

It also restates the declaration

made by the NATO heads of state at

the recent summit in Bucharest, Romania,

in which they confidently stated

their belief that the Republic of

Georgia will become a member of

NATO some day. And it urges NATO allies

to favorably consider Georgia’s application

for admission in the Membership

Action Plan, or MAP, during the

NATO Ministers meeting this December,

MAP being a program to simply

help interested applicants for membership

and prepare them to meet the

standards required of all NATO allies.

Mr. Speaker, this resolution is intended

to support the sovereignty of

Georgia and support an end to any irresponsible

actions by the Russian Government

that undermine its sovereignty

and the prospects for a peaceful

resolution of the separatist conflicts

in that country.

I note again as well that nothing

stated in this resolution with regard to

NATO and Georgia’s interest in membership

in that alliance is any different

from what was stated at the recent

NATO summit.

I support this resolution and urge all

my colleagues to do the same as well.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of

my time.