



Remarks with Macedonian Foreign Minister Antonio Milososki Upon Signing Joint Declaration of Strategic Partnership and Cooperation

Secretary Condoleezza Rice

Washington, DC

May 7, 2008

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SECRETARY RICE: I would very much like to welcome my colleague, the Foreign Minister of Macedonia. Antonio, it is very nice to have you here. The Foreign Minister and I have just signed an important agreement which is a framework for cooperation between the United States and Macedonia. It has a number of elements that we will develop, including economic and trade ties, cooperation between our populations. We will look at security issues that Macedonia may wish to train its forces for counterterrorism and the like. And so it can be a quite broad agreement. And we have pledged today to look at several follow-up agreements that we might be able to make.

This agreement is really from the people of the United States to the people of Macedonia. I hope a very strong sign of the enduring cooperation and friendship between Macedonia and the United States. We share values with Macedonia. We have been very proud to be a part of the significant reforms that Macedonia has made. And I think that it is well known that the United States strongly supports the accession of Macedonia to NATO as soon as the name dispute can be reconciled. We hope that that will happen very, very soon, because Macedonia deserves to be a member of NATO. Macedonia will enhance NATO's strength, prosperity, and democracy. And we very much look forward to the day when Macedonia serves side by side with Americans as members of NATO as they serve side by side today in so many of our efforts to promote and sustain democracy. And so thank you very much, Foreign Minister, for being here and now the floor is yours.

FOREIGN MINISTER MILOSOSKI: Thank you. Madame Secretary, thank you very much. This is a very important event for Macedonia. It shows that our bilateral relations are founded on a mutual trust and real partnership. In the United States, we see one credible partner and ally and Macedonia will remain a reliable partner of the United States in our efforts to achieve our common goals sharing our common values. We have proven, once again, that we are prepared to continue with our reforms, to continue with our strong partnership. Our goals are full membership into NATO. Our soldiers are serving side by side, shoulder to shoulder with American and other soldiers in the NATO missions in the world. And Macedonia has proven that as a peaceful nation in Southeastern Europe, could really contribute to the peace, stability and economic development in the region.

Therefore, this is taken as a very historic event and step in our bilateral relations, which will be upgraded in every level, especially in respect of the economy and trade, security cooperation and people-to-people contacts. Thank you very much on behalf of the Macedonian citizens. Thank you.

(Applause.)

QUESTION: Madame Secretary. Burma, a question on Burma, please?

SECRETARY RICE: Do you mind if I take this question on Burma?

FOREIGN MINISTER MILOSOSKI: Yes.

QUESTION: Thank you. Do you think that the military regime there is shooting itself in the foot by not taking international assistance? Are you frustrated by the fact that they won't allow U.S. aid in?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, first, let me say that we are deeply concerned about the growing humanitarian crisis in Burma. This is a terrible event. While it is not possible to get reliable figures on how many people are affected, we know that there are many, many, many people who need the help of the international community. And I have been very gratified by the willingness of the international community to step up to the task. There are millions and millions of dollars waiting to be delivered that can help the Burmese people to get through this difficult time. There are assistance teams, including an American assistance team that would be ready to help the people of Burma. And what remains is for the Burmese Government to allow the international community to help its people.

It should be a simple matter. This is not a matter of politics. This is a matter of a humanitarian crisis. And it should be a matter that the Government of Burma wants to see its people receive the help that is available to them. And so we are speaking with governments that might have influence with Burma. We have spoken with all of the nations that you might expect and I will myself make some other calls because this is the kind of crisis that will only get worse, without humanitarian assistance being made available from the international community. Thank you.

QUESTION: Madame, at least one question on Macedonia?

SECRETARY RICE: Yes.

QUESTION: How do you see the chance for a compromise between Macedonia and Greece, when actually Greek people are very clear they – that they do not deny the existence of Macedonia (inaudible)?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, Macedonia is a good friend of the United States. Greece is a good friend of the United States. And it is our great hope that with enough will and enough effort and enough flexibility, that this issue can be resolved. Because NATO – during the NATO meetings in Bucharest, it was very clear that that the members of NATO want Macedonia to be invited into NATO and that we hope to have that happen as soon as possible. We are encouraging Ambassador Nimetz to redouble his efforts. We are encouraging Greece and Macedonia to work hard at this. Nothing could be better than to get it resolved because Macedonia very much deserves the invitation that it was unable to receive at Bucharest. Thank you.

QUESTION: Madame Secretary, could you (inaudible) transfer the P-5 (inaudible) --

SECRETARY RICE: Sorry. Thank you.

2008/361

Released on May 7, 2008

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