

## Remarks With Bulgarian Foreign Minister Ivailo Kalfin

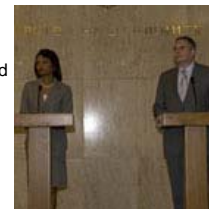
**Secretary Condoleezza Rice**

Sofia, Bulgaria

July 9, 2008

[Video Excerpt](#)

**FOREIGN MINISTER KALFIN:** (Via interpreter) Ladies and gentlemen, today in Bulgaria I have the pleasure of hosting and welcoming my fellow minister and very good friend and co-worker, the Secretary of State Madame Condoleezza Rice. This visit of Madame Rice to Sofia is an element of the excellent – an important element of the excellent bilateral relations. I will say that in 105 years of history of our diplomatic relations since they were established, we have never had better bilateral relations that are measurable in strategic partnership, friendship, and mutual trust as today. We not only share common principles of democracy, but we shoulder-to-shoulder fight together for protecting these principles of democracy in different parts of the globe. Also, Bulgaria is one of the countries in Europe that is a member of the EU and NATO, which attaches enormous significance to transatlantic relations. Through a close dialogue with the United States of America, the interaction between Europe and United States, between the EU and the USA is of exceptional significance, especially in today's globalized world.



We have been discussing a number of issues having to do with bilateral relations and cooperation in important – on important points of international life. On a bilateral basis, we have discussed an issue which is followed very closely by the public in Bulgaria, having to do with the process of the visa waiver and the inclusion of Bulgaria into the visa-free program. An important step was made during the visit of Prime Minister Stanishev to Washington last month. We are working very actively in order to get the job done, so that we could proceed to the next stage, which is the signature of a memorandum of cooperation.

In the political-military fields, in addition to the observation of excellent cooperation between us, we have also observed that the process of signing the additional agreements that enable the use of joint military facilities is almost completed – cooperation in the military field in different parts of the world. You know that in recent years we have been paying special attention to economic cooperation, to drawing the interest of American investors in Bulgaria, which is already paying back.

Today we enjoy investment from major American companies, like Tishman, Hewlett-Packard, AES, IBM and others, which are already in Bulgaria and which envision broadening their business here. This is very important to us and we are going to continue to develop our cooperation in this field. I believe that the economic dimension is also very important for developing relations.

There are many points around the world on which we work together and we are keen on working very closely with the United States of America. Of course, to Bulgaria the priorities are: the (inaudible) of the Western Balkans, the situation in Kosovo, the progress of our neighbors from the Republic of Macedonia towards NATO membership and EU membership. These were issues that were likewise discussed. (Inaudible) cooperation, the necessity of active dialogue and promoting relations, including in the fields of energy with the countries of the Caucasus and Central Asia -- these are all subjects on which we have a very active dialogue and commonality of positions.

Of course, other important issues relate to the broadening of NATO, the – what was discussed during the Bucharest meeting, the next step that could be made with respect to Ukraine and Georgia for an action plan for membership for these two countries. Bulgaria is in support of this next step and will continue to uphold its position in the future. This perhaps – or these, perhaps, were the main points that we have been discussing today. Of course, they do not in any way exhaust the range of international issues that – on which we have and will continue to have very close coordination and active interaction between us in the future.

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, thank you very much. It's a pleasure to be here. I want very much to say how good it is to be in Bulgaria. We see each other around the world, but it is nice to be here and to stand with a good friend, a friend with whom we share values and with whom we increasingly share responsibilities around the world. Whether in Iraq or Afghanistan or in the Western Balkans, these are important issues that can only be resolved through firm resolution to one's – or firm resolve in one's values, but also through good cooperation with good friends. And it's great to be here.

We have had extensive discussions. I look forward, in particular, to continuing the work that we are doing on the visa waiver because, of course, the United States would like to see Bulgarians able to visit the United States more easily. There is still work ahead of us, but the understanding that was reached, the declaration that was reached when the Prime Minister was in Washington is, I hope, a sign of commitment of the United States in trying to help resolve this issue. And so we will work together on that.

As you said, we have also talked about a number of regional and global issues, and I might just underscore the importance that I attach to the discussions that we've had on energy security, energy cooperation, and I look forward to furthering those discussions, perhaps at the level of asking our Envoy for Energy Affairs, Mr. Boyden Gray, to come out and talk with you soon, because Bulgaria has been an important partner in talking about these very important issues of finding ways to secure our energy supply and to make certain that our economies continue to grow.

And in that regard, let me say that I have been very impressed with what I've seen here in Sofia. It's a boom town; that's very clear. And I'm very pleased to hear that U.S. foreign direct investment is one of the reasons for the growth of this economy. Obviously, though, the Bulgarian Government is also making some good decisions in terms of economic policy, because without those decisions you would not be receiving the foreign direct investment that you are.

So I look forward to many further conversations with you, but thank you very much for hosting me here.

**MODERATOR:** You have four members of the press for two questions each.

**QUESTION:** (Via interpreter) Bulgarian National Television. In relation to the visa agreement, Mr. Kalfin, what will Bulgaria do in specific terms to live up to the American agreements?

And Madame Rice, when will the visas be ultimately dropped? When can we expect real change concerning Bulgarians in relation to this agreement, bearing in mind that some of the requirements of the American side depend on you, like the number of visa refusals, for example? What needs to be done?

**FOREIGN MINISTER KALFIN:** (Via interpreter) What needs to be done, says the minister. Let me remind you that Bulgaria was the first country in central Eastern Europe to have signed a roadmap with United States. What are the specific steps that need to be made? In the near future, what Bulgaria needs to do is carry out the procedure as soon as possible and to start issuing biometric passports. This is one of the requirements for the next step, which is the memorandum of understanding. But of course, we (inaudible) the declaration that we have signed. We are in preparation. And in the coming months we will work very hard with respect to the exchange of information, specifying the criteria, and so forth. These are the points on which we'll be working on a priority basis in the coming months.

**SECRETARY RICE:** (Inaudible) while I can't give you a date at which this will be complete because, of course, it does depend in part, in large part, on issues like the biometric passport. But I can tell you that the United States is committed to the roadmap that we signed, the declaration. And we have an actual law that requires that the United States track certain indicators, and we are working with Bulgaria to track those indicators. The law, in fact, is – now gives us the kind of flexibility that we need to be able to move forward, and it was the President who felt very strongly that he wanted to have a better prospect for our good friends and allies in Central and Eastern Europe, like Bulgaria. And so we will work very, very hard, and it's my hope that the memorandum of understanding can be moved forward quite soon.

**QUESTION:** Madame Secretary, Russia reacted quite strongly to the signing yesterday of the (inaudible) missile, and I think the (inaudible) – oh, is this better? Russia reacted quite strongly to your signing yesterday of the missile shield (inaudible) probably not to be too thrilled with your visit to Georgia later and in the G-8 summit. Mr. Medvedev said that he could report no progress on the disagreements-- security disagreements that Russia has with the United States. Your reaction to that, please, and do you think that you are leaving a broken relationship with Russia for the next administration?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, first of all, on the Russian reaction to the missile defense signing yesterday, I'm sorry to say I think it was predictable, if disappointing, given all of the efforts that Secretary Gates and I have made to offer to the Russians significant ways for transparency, for confidence-building measures and for cooperation. And I still hope that Russia will look at the actual threat environment, look at the fact that the Iranians are developing ever-longer ranges of missiles, which they apparently intend to test, and that the Russians will see that this is not aimed at them.

Now, as to Georgia, the United States considers Georgia to be a good friend. The United States considers the territorial integrity of Georgia to be inviolable. There have been a number of moves recently by the Russian Federation that have, in fact, not been helpful in terms of the frozen conflict there with Georgia and Abkhazia. But I'm going to visit a friend, and I don't expect much comment about the United States going to visit a friend.

Finally, as to the relationship, the United States and Russia have cooperated well on a number of issues. We are cooperating well in Northeast Asia, in the Six-Party Talks on North Korea. We are cooperating well on the P-5+1 on Iran. We just sent forward a proposal to the Iranians that has the signature of all six foreign ministers, including mine and Sergey Lavrov's. We are cooperating well on the Middle East, through the Quartet. We've got good cooperation on counterterrorism, good cooperation on the issues concerning civil-nuclear cooperation. We, in fact, want to see the 123 agreement that we have with the Russians ratified, or attested to by the United States Congress. So there's a whole range of very good relations.

The United States is probably the most supportive of Russian accession to the WTO of the major developed states. So I think we're leading a very strong relationship, as is demonstrated by the Strategic Framework Agreement that Presidents Bush and President Putin signed in Sochi. But it's a complicated relationship, because whenever you have a relationship this big and with this many elements, there are going to be elements of both compromise -- of conflict and cooperation. And both are evident in the relationship with Russia.

**QUESTION:** (Via interpreter) One more question, please. *Standard Daily*. Mrs. Rice, Bulgaria is outside the American anti-missile defense program. Does this mean that the role of Bulgaria is played down in this administration, and care to discuss this issue today in light of the recent events, including Iran?

**SECRETARY RICE:** We did not discuss missile defense today. We – Bulgaria, a partner, is, of course, a member of NATO. And NATO, in Bucharest, made a very strong declaration in favor of missile defense, given the threats of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. And the United States is continuing to work to make certain that both its efforts at improving its national defenses-- that its efforts at improving its national defenses are completely coordinated with-- integrated with what we are going to do with NATO, so that there's a joint architecture for that. And so there is, in effect, no need to discuss it, because Bulgaria participates through its membership in NATO in all of those discussions.

**QUESTION:** Madam Secretary? Yes. What was your reaction to the Iranian test-fire of the new missiles? Do you see it as a provocation that could lead to eventual Israeli or even U.S. military reaction -- action? And finally, do you also – do you see some room for the P-5+1 to send at least some envoys to Iran and start communications and talks based on their response to the incentives package?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, the Iranians have the package and Javier Solana is in contact with them to see what the next steps are. But in terms of the missile test, I see it as evidence that the missile threat is not an imaginary one, and that those who say that there is no Iranian missile threat (inaudible) should be building missile defenses, perhaps ought to talk to the Iranians about their (inaudible even about the distance and the range of the missiles that they test-fired. It's time to-- for the Iranians to stop violating their Security Council obligations and start to fulfill them.

Thank you.

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