



## Current Situation in Kosovo

**Daniel Fried, Assistant Secretary for European and Eurasian Affairs**

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**Assistant Secretary Fried:** -- a number of months since independence, and it has been a relatively quiet, relatively quiet and successful beginning of Kosovo's life as an independent country, but challenges remain. So I wanted to go through that with you.

As you remember, Kosovo declared its independence in February. There were at the time expectations that there might be severe problems, great violence, displacement of persons, conflict, fighting. There were any number of very dire scenarios which we thought were possible but not likely, were possible, and for which we planned, none of which turned out to be true.

With the exception of some minor and one major incident on March 17<sup>th</sup> -- you remember the courthouse shootings which resulted in loss of life -- it has been relatively peaceful so far.

Also in the good news department, the Kosovo government and parliament have functioned well and efficiently. Their main achievement so far has been to pass the vast bulk of the Ahtisaari Plan required laws, including the laws which provide for decentralization and Serb minority protection. These laws are crucial to Kosovo's future as a country for all the people who live there. This was part of the package which the Kosovars agreed to for independence and they have done their job.

The second great Kosovo achievement was that it passed its constitution and has implemented it. The constitution has now come into effect last month.

There has been no major ethnic violence, no refugee flows, the Kosovo government has also responded with restraint and responsibility to the provocations which have occurred. That is the good news.

Externally the good news is, as we hoped, over two-thirds of the European Union countries and NATO and now a majority of Security Council members have recognized Kosovo. Forty-three countries in all. Europe, most European countries have recognized Kosovo. The next challenge will be for recognitions to come in from non-European countries. We expected Europe to be first, and we hope that we get a steady stream of countries recognizing as time goes on.

Let me turn to the challenges because these are quite significant, and I do not want to leave you with the impression that I'm announcing clear waters ahead, no trouble on the horizon. I don't expect trouble, but we plan for it and there are serious challenges remaining.

The chief challenge is in the north where in Mitrovica and the north of the Ibar the writ of the Kosovo government has not yet run. That is a part of Kosovo which is still Serb majority, and it is a place where the one major outbreak of violence did occur. You recall on March 17<sup>th</sup> -- there is a problem in the north and that problem is going to have to be addressed by the international community working with the Kosovo authorities showing patience, determination, steadiness and a willingness to work in practical ways on the ground to create a sustainable situation that does not involve hardening the differences that already exist.

More challenges will occur. The Kosovo economy is beginning to move ahead. The Kosovo Finance Minister was here last week but their economy will have to get up and running so you don't have large numbers of unemployed people, young men with nothing to do. Not a good thing.

To address the problems of the north and the Kosovo economy which were the two problems I've identified, the United States and the Europeans working together have arranged for the transition between the UN, UNMIK to the European Union force EULEX, and as you know EULEX is about a 2,000 person force which includes judges and police. It is a rule of law mission but it also includes police on the ground.

To address the economy, the European Commission is hosting in Brussels on July 11<sup>th</sup> European countries, World Bank, IMF donors for a Kosovo Economic Support Conference. We expect that this conference will raise some money to support the Kosovars. The United States is going to throw in \$400 million over the next four years. We believe European pledges will be significantly more than that, and you'll have non-European pledges, and we expect total pledges of well over one billion dollars which over four years we estimate will help the Kosovo government get off to a good start.

I will stop soon, but I want to address one lesson of what we've done in Kosovo. This has been an example where the United States and Europe have worked together extraordinarily closely and under difficult conditions. A year ago, it was dawning on us that there would never be a Security Council Resolution providing for Kosovo's final status. The Russians made clear they would veto any such resolution. At that point, the European Union had to face the fact that it would have to act on Kosovo status and European countries had to face the fact that they had to act on Kosovo status without a UN Resolution. This was extraordinarily difficult and the European response was staunch and strong. The European countries in the so-called Quint -- the United States, Great Britain, France, Germany, Italy -- acted with determination and solidarity and it is because of that we have achieved the progress we have achieved. It is the intention of the United States to keep working very closely with our European colleagues and allies in the months ahead.

Now that's a sketch overview, and as I said this is not headlines but it's to recall the narrative. The good news, the tough news, the challenges ahead in European solidarity.

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