



Remarks with Kosovo President Fatmir Sejdiu and Kosovo Prime Minister Hashim Thaci

Secretary Condoleezza Rice

Benjamin Franklin Room
Washington, DC
July 18, 2008

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SECRETARY RICE: Good morning. I'm honored to welcome President Sejdiu and Prime Minister Thaci on their first visit to Washington as the leaders of an independent Kosovo.

Oh, that's right, you're translating simultaneously. Good.

I congratulated the President and the Prime Minister on Kosovo's progress in the first months of independence, including its far-reaching protections for Serb communities and other implementation of the Ahtisaari plan.

More than 40 countries have recognized Kosovo, including over two-thirds of the European Union and NATO, and a majority of UN Security Council members. The United States will continue to assist Kosovo as it builds its multiethnic government and its democratic institutions. We have recently pledged \$400 million at – for the next couple of years, during a donors conference. This is, in fact, emblematic of U.S. support, which has been over \$1 billion in aid in the last decade.

Later today, I'm going to swear in Tina Kaidanow, who is an experienced Foreign Service Officer, is well-known to the people of Kosovo. She's been very involved, and she's going to be the first Ambassador to Kosovo. And so, as we took a picture of the delegation, I said that it was an historic moment, and indeed it is an historic moment. I'm very pleased to stand here with the President and the Prime Minister of the newly independent Kosovo.

The people of Kosovo have a long road ahead to build their multiethnic democracy. But if the first few months are any indication, they have the will and the dedication and the commitment and the skill to do so. And as they do so, they will have a strong friend in the United States of America.

Mr. President.

PRESIDENT SEJDIU: (Via interpreter) Greetings. It is a very important – extremely important event for us to express our gratitude for this – the United States has given to the Kosovo people for a whole – for a long period of time in its road for independence, for freedom, for building a country for all the citizens.

This is an extraordinary occasion, Ms. Secretary, to express our pledge that we'll continue on this occasion to work together to increase the relations between the two countries. And at the same time, we'll have as an objective to build a Kosovo which will be a Kosovo of values, the country of all. And I think that in this occasion, it will be a very important step, also in the development of the country, especially in the economic aspect, making Kosovo the country of peace and stability.

PRIME MINISTER THACI: (Via interpreter) Thank you, Ms. Secretary, for the support that the United States is giving to the Kosovo people. Our country is a country of peace, stability, and with a prospective of development with excellent relations with all the neighboring countries – Macedonia, Albania, Montenegro, and in the future, Serbia.

In this period of six months, we have achieved progress – we've made progress. This is a progress that has been supported by you. The – this is the first delegation that comes as a – to visit Washington. We pledge that we'll achieve more successes in the future so that Kosovo will become part of the family – of NATO family and EU, and will have excellent relations with the United States always. And the Kosovo people are always grateful to the United States.

QUESTION: Madame Secretary, what did you suggest for the Kosovar leadership, having in mind the Russian and Serbian stand on Kosovo's status? And how do you see the future of Kosovo?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, I think the future of Kosovo will be very bright. It has determined people, it has determined leadership, and it has determined friends. It is true that not everyone was very pleased to see the emergence of an independent Kosovo. But I would just repeat that there are more than 40 countries that have formally recognized Kosovo – much of the European Union, much of NATO, much of the Security Council, but also countries in Asia and the Middle East. And I know that there will be more. It is also the case that there are countries that have not formally recognized Kosovo, but have very good relations with Kosovo, particularly countries in the region, neighboring countries.

And so I believe that if Kosovo continues to concentrate on building its multiethnic democracy, on protecting minority rights, on protecting religious freedom, on building institutions that can deliver for its people economically, which is why the donor conference, which was very successful, was so important, that Kosovo will have a bright future. And those who do – who did not wish to see an independent Kosovo will understand that there is going to be an – there is an independent Kosovo and it is going to continue to be.

The United States will try to help in every way that we can. We want to have good relations with Serbia. And we have reached out to Serbia, which – where the leadership says that it wants a European perspective. And the future of both Serbia and Kosovo are in Europe, in their European identity, in their European home, in making the reforms necessary and gaining the stability to be a part of Europe's future. And so that is what we will continue to recognize and continue to emphasize, and the leadership of Kosovo is demonstrating that it is quite capable of assuring that future.

QUESTION: Madame Secretary, by sending Under Secretary Burns to Geneva this weekend, is the United States signaling a desire for a new relationship with Iran? And would this relationship – or could it include interest sections in each other's capitals and perhaps direct flights? And does this

shift in U.S. tactics draw any inspiration from the Obama campaign's positions? Thank you.

SECRETARY RICE: This decision to send Under Secretary Burns is an affirmation of the policy that we have been pursuing with our European allies, with the P-5+1, for some time now. It is, in fact, a strong signal to the entire world that we have been very serious about this diplomacy and we will remain very serious about this diplomacy.

I would remind you that I signed the letter that sent the proposal, forwarded the proposal, to the Iranian regime. And this is, in a sense, the bookend. Bill Burns will go to receive the Iranian response.

But it should be very clear to everyone, the United States has a condition for the beginning of negotiations with Iran, and that condition remains the verifiable suspension of Iran's enrichment and reprocessing activities; a condition, by the way, that is now an international condition since it is memorialized in three separate Security Council resolutions. And so that remains the U.S. position and it will continue to be the U.S. position.

I've said many times that Iran is a difficult and dangerous state, and it is a state that is pursuing policies that are dangerous to our friends and dangerous to international peace and stability, particularly its support for terrorism and its pursuit of this nuclear weapons – this weapon – this nuclear technology that could lead to a nuclear weapon. But we have been very clear that any country can change course. The United States doesn't have any permanent enemies. And we hope that the signal that we're sending, that we fully support the track that Iran could take for a better relationship with the international community, is one that the United States stands fully behind.

We will see what happens on Saturday, but that will be the message that Bill Burns will be delivering, and he will therefore be reinforcing strongly the policy that the United States has been following since 2006.

Thank you very much.

2008/595

Released on July 18, 2008

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