



Remarks With the Bulgarian Foreign Minister Ivailo Kalfin At the Signing of the Science and Technology Cooperation Agreement Ceremony

Secretary Condoleezza Rice

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SECRETARY RICE: Good morning. I'm very pleased to welcome back to Washington my friend and my colleague -- Ivailo, welcome, it's good to have you here -- the Foreign Minister and Deputy Prime Minister of Bulgaria.

We have a very strong friendship, a very strong relationship. The President was able to visit Bulgaria last year; we're together in Iraq and Afghanistan; we are, of course, NATO allies. And we were delighted at the accession fully into the European Union of Bulgaria. Bulgaria is a strong voice for democracy, a strong voice for prosperity and peace, and a strong voice for the transatlantic relationship between Europe and the United States.

The signing of this science and technology agreement is one of the many examples of cooperation that we have and we're continuing to expand that cooperation. Our commercial ties are expanding as well. U.S. direct investment in Bulgaria surpassed \$1 billion in 2007. It was my great pleasure to note too that we -- as the Bulgarians have acceded to the European Union, that we have had a full-ranging discussion of all the challenges that we will face in 2008.

And as we face those challenges, whether it be the upcoming summit in Bucharest at which we will look again at the future of NATO and the very important work that we are doing as we work together to bring about a more secure and prosperous and democratic Balkans, of course, as we face the challenges related to Kosovo, it is really good to have a good friend and good colleague like you, Ivailo, and also the friendship between the United States and Bulgaria to be a foundation for solving those many challenges.

So thank you for being here.

FOREIGN MINISTER KALFIN: Thank you very much, Condi. And I would like to really thank for this opportunity and for the excellent and deep dialogue that we continue having with -- between our two countries. And I had the opportunity to express again our gratitude for the support that we have been provided over the years, including in the last year. One of the very visible in Bulgaria -- in fact, was the liberation of the nurses from Libya. But this is only one of the important issues. We have been working together and we have been receiving the support from the United States.

Of course, we have on the agenda for the next year very important issues as well: the continuation now of political and military cooperation. As you, Condi, said, Bulgaria is -- has increased the participation in Afghanistan, we've continued our participation in Iraq in the efforts to stabilize these two countries, and we are going to continue doing so as a loyal and good partner within NATO and within the -- our -- with our friends.

Of course, what is very important for us, this is the cooperation with the United States and the cooperation between the European Union and the United States on the Kosovo issue and on the Balkans. This was a very substantial part of our discussion today. Kosovo is a very sensitive point. Unfortunately, all the efforts to reach a solution which would be accepted by right of (inaudible) were exhausted despite the very -- many efforts of the international community. Now we have to see what is the way to continuing now to preserve the stability and to give the whole region an opportunity to step on a constructive path and to start working intensively for the stabilization of (inaudible).

And these are very important events that are going to come in the months ahead. I was very happy that we share very much the same opinions on the developments and on the future of this region. Thank you very much.

SECRETARY RICE: Thank you.

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[BACK TO TOP](#)

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