

# The Washington Times

H WASHINGTON TIMES για το όνομα:

With the attention of Euro-Atlantic diplomats understandably focused on cooling the conflict in the Caucasus, the United States must not forget that much work remains to be done to address tensions elsewhere in the mountains of Southeastern Europe.

Enhancing and preserving the hard-won stability of the Balkans requires that Washington not become complacent about remaining irredentist agendas in this complex region. This should be Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's focus when she is in New York this week at the convening of the United Nations General Assembly with the foreign ministers of Greece and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

In 1944, Secretary of State Edward Stettinius expressed concerns about Yugoslavian communist leader Josip Broz Tito creating a "Macedonian" province and consciousness among his people. Stettinius saw the destructive potential in Tito's choice of a name describing an ancient geographical area, 52 percent of which is located in modern Greece, 9 percent in Bulgaria and 39 percent in Yugoslavia. His description of Tito's actions as "a possible cloak for aggressive intentions against Greece" manifested years later when Tito's "Macedonians" crossed into Greece as participants in Greece's anti-communist civil war (1946-49).

Nearly half a century later, that Yugoslavian province became an independent nation in 1991 identified by the United Nations and internationally as the "Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" or "FYROM." Yet Tito's furtive aims live on in many ways, including the nation's pursuit of the name "Macedonia." Its new constitution called on all "Macedonians" in neighboring countries to rise up and unite. In addition, FYROM printed currency featuring the White Tower of Salonika (Thessaloniki), Greece, and created a flag featuring the Macedonian symbol from the dynasty of Philip of Macedon and his son Alexander the Great, which was located in Greece.

Years of productive U.S. and U.N. diplomacy moved FYROM to drop the offending language from its constitution and symbols from its currency and flag. Many believed FYROM was moving toward adopting a name such as "North Macedonia" or "Upper Macedonia" which appropriately describes its own geography.

However in 2004, the administration disregarded possible long-term consequences and focused exclusively on short-term intra-FYROM political goals. It split from U.N., NATO and EU policies to recognize FYROM as the "Republic of Macedonia" in a misguided attempt to provide cover to Western-oriented leaders in an intensely nationalistic political environment. This sudden about-face undermined international efforts to solve the name issue, and emboldened those within FYROM opposed to a diplomatic solution.

Shortly thereafter, a videotape surfaced showing FYROM's state schools teaching that northern Greece is FYROM territory occupied by Greece. Maps showing northern Greece as part of FYROM also appeared in school textbooks and one was recently displayed behind Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski at a ceremony. Most recently the political leadership in Skopje launched an unprecedented campaign of claims against Greece, thus undermining the ongoing talks under United Nations auspices.

**Due to FYROM's intransigence on the name dispute, it was prohibited from joining NATO** at the group's April summit, thus thwarting American security interests. In Bucharest, NATO leaders unanimously decided that an invitation to FYROM will be extended as soon as a mutually acceptable solution to the name issue has been reached. In

breaking with the international community on FYROM's name and failing to condemn its provocations, the U.S. administration bolstered FYROM's intransigence and inadvertently contributed to the deadlock in NATO.

To correct this, we recently requested clarification on the administration's position on this issue. [The State Department responded with a letter that stated](#), "**Our ambassador [to FYROM] will, as well, help these leaders understand the dangers of irredentism in any form and the importance of avoiding the implications of irredentism in any form.**"

From our perspective, this was an improvement on the U.S. position. Yet when this language from the letter was recently read aloud at a State Department briefing, the department's spokesman indicated its position on the issue had not changed. We strongly believe it would be an error to eschew progress on this issue at the very moment it is most required.

Miss Rice has an ideal opportunity in New York to demonstrate America's opposition to any form of irredentism in FYROM and resolve the question of accession to NATO. **She can tell FYROM that unless it accepts an international name that describes only its territory, such as "North" or "Upper" Macedonia, to be also used in the bilateral relations with the United States, by a time certain, the U.S. will withdraw bilateral recognition of FYROM as "Republic of Macedonia."**

She can thus regenerate the American pressure necessary to resolve the problem, avoid sowing the seeds of another potential conflict in Europe and open the door for FYROM's accession to the European Union and NATO. This requires engagement, leadership and proactive diplomacy. Such a solution will have bipartisan support in the Congress.

*Bob Menendez, a New Jersey Democrat, and Olympia J. Snowe, a Maine Republican, are members of the United States Senate.*