



KOSOVO

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September 25, 2007

Rice: EU must make tough choice and recognize Kosovo independence

Transcript of Reuters interview, US State Department
<http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2007/09/92665.htm>

QUESTION: Kosovo is one of the looming crises between now and the end of the year. Is the United States considering unilaterally recognizing Kosovo as independent if no broader agreement is reached in the Security Council this year?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, the United States is certainly committed to the logic of the Ahtisaari plan. And the logic of the Ahtisaari plan is that there isn't going to be a reunification of Serbia and Kosovo, and that both Kosovo and Serbia need to get on with their futures and leave behind their past.

We have committed to 120 days to see if the circumstances, the atmosphere, even some of the actual moves that the two sides could make, could make it a more amicable outcome. But in the final analysis, you know, the President was very clear when he was in Albania that there is going to be an independent Kosovo. Now, the question of how we get there, who else - I do believe the Europeans are in the same posture. How we get there, I think, is what's still to be determined. But there's going to be an independent Kosovo. We're dedicated to that. I think it's the only potential - the only solution that is potentially stabilizing for the Balkans rather than destabilizing for the Balkans.

We want very much to have good relations with Serbia and for Serbia to find its European home, but it's going to be difficult for Serbia to find a European home if it holds on to - you know, to old hopes. It's really time for everybody to move forward.

I've heard good things, frankly, about the meetings that have been going on, good things about the coordination and work that Russia, the EU and the United States are doing together in the troika. There are new ideas on the table, not about the actual status but about some of the tools and mechanisms that might be used to make relations between Serbia and Kosovo smoother. The Kosovars could do more, and we're pressing them to do more, to assure everyone that they really are going to live up to the other logic of the Ahtisaari plan, which is that this has to be a state that is completely devoted to minority rights, religious protections and so forth.

QUESTION: Some of the diplomats involved say that the problem is that the Kosovars and the Serbs have no real incentive to negotiate seriously because they count on the Russians to veto a resolution and the Kosovars have no incentive because they can count on the United States to recognize UDI. What's your response to that?



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SECRETARY RICE: Well, frankly, I was concerned about the same thing. Now, we've told the Kosovars that we don't think that a unilateral declaration of independence is a very good idea and so we need to go through this process.

I've been pleasantly surprised, as somebody who is fairly skeptical about what could be achieved, that I do think they're making some progress. Not that the Serbs and the Kosovars have - are suddenly going to come to the same understanding of what the final status will look like, but they are making, I think, some progress on some of the other issues that could lead to a more amicable and sustainable outcome at the end of this. And as I said, there's been good feeling about the cooperation between the EU, Russia and the United States.

QUESTION: Do you feel at the end of the process it will - you'll be prepared to let the European Union, as it were, take the lead in determining the final status, or do you think it's going to take American leadership to get the Europeans there?

SECRETARY RICE: Oh, I think it'll take the United States and Europe together on this one and when I talk to the Europeans, they all say, you know, we know that Europe - the Europeans say about themselves that they know that ultimately, the Balkans is, of course, much closer to Europe than to the United States and they need a stable Balkans so they're going to have to do - they're going to have to take the tough decisions and do the right thing.