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Interview with Dmitry Rogozin, the Russian Ambassador to NATO

KosovoCompromise Staff

KC: Will Dmitry Medvedev, as the new Russian president, continue the Kosovo policy of his predecessor, Vladimir Putin?

ROGOZIN: It is quite symbolic that just a few days before being elected, Medvedev visited Belgrade. It is a good sign. Russia once again demonstrated on which side it was by visiting Belgrade. To my friends in Russia, I explain one simple thing: there are pro-Serbian emotions in Russia, but that is not what is most important. Russia defends peace, rules of behavior which have existed for over 60 years and that is the most important thing, because the question of Kosovo cannot be solved either in Brussels or Washington, it can only be resolved in Belgrade, in Serbia. If this question is to be decided in Pristina, in Brussels, in Washington, it would mean chaos.

KC: What do you expect from the Russian presidency at the Security Council in March?

ROGOZIN: Russia's position is clear. We will do everything necessary to avoid Kosovo gaining any status within the UN. We will do everything possible to minimize the importance of international presences outside of resolution 1244. We are watching very carefully what Kfor is doing. They have only one mandate, the one legitimized by the Security Council. No other document is legal. There's another important aspect for the future. If the EU or NATO as international organizations take unilateral decisions, it would mean they would oppose the UN status. Russia's task here is to defend the UN.

KC: But the EU and the US have already acted outside of the UN Security Council. They are interpreting "creatively" the resolution 1244. Do you think the EU will be able to implement the mandate of its missions?

ROGOZIN: I personally like being creative and improvising. But not in politics. Kosovo is a European crossroad. The EU is being creative on a crossroad. You can imagine that the EU is in a car, and that the lights show red. But the EU says it's not red, it's pink, maybe we should go. Ok, go, but don't be disappointed or surprised if something comes in front of you from the right side. So, we will not tolerate any improvisations on Kosovo, we will defend fundamental international law.

KC: How can Russia prevent these improvisation? EU and US officials say they did not get a green light, but that they did not get a red light either, so they argue they can pursue their policy.



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ROGOZIN: If they are daltonic and cannot distinguish colors, they should be deprived of their driving licences. Let them ride a bicycle. Certain European capitals would like to provoke Kosovo's Serbs to react inadequately, as to declare that the Serbs had attacked, that they were forced to evacuate the UN. It's very important that Kosovo Serbs are organized and do not react to provocations so that resolution 1244 remains in effect. As for us, we will watch very carefully that Kfor remains within its mandate. If they go beyond their mandate, we will talk in New York, not in Brussels.

KC: What is the red line for Kfor's mandate? Is it Kfor coercing Serbs to participate in Kosovo institutions or is it extending its mandate by training Albanian forces planned by the Ahtisaari plan?

ROGOZIN: Ahtisaari is the red line. Ahtisaari is the greatest improvisator, the one-man show. Let him improvise in Finland, let the Finnish Swedes have the Ahtisaari plan. Let NATO forces pay for Finnish Swedes to train. I do not know who is Ahtisaari. I do not know of any Ahtisaari plan. I know of the UN Secretary-General and UNSC 1244. In questions of security, we have to stick to the fundamentals and be straightforward. No improvisation is possible. All enlargement of mandate means the violation of the mandate. For example, the restrictions of the freedom of movement of Serbian officials in Kosovo is a violation of the mandate. Serbian Minister for Kosovo Slobodan Samardzic had some problems entering Kosovo, so we intervened by informing our colleagues and he was able to go there. Attempts by Kfor to replace mayors in Mitrovica is a violation. Using armed forces against civilian demonstrators is a violation. Blocking the crossing between Mitrovica and Serbia is also a violation. Forming security forces is a gross violation. It goes without saying that to help build an Albanian army is a gross violation.

KC: What could you do as ambassador if Kfor decides to interpret resolution 1244 creatively?

ROGOZIN: I have instructions for that particular case, but it is a military secret.

KC: Kosovo Serb leaders have called for a comeback of Russian troops. Is this a possibility?

ROGOZIN: I don't even want to discuss something that is a competence of the president of the Russian federation. I personally do not see any reasons to do that, but it is up to the Russian president to decide. I think Russia is renowned politically and morally in the Balkans so we restrict ourselves to this. Let us not provoke our interlocutors.

KC: Serbia has been humiliated by the coordination of independence of Kosovo by Brussels and Washington, which have falsified resolution 1244 and now



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created the so-called the International Steering Group. Some people also say it is a humiliation also for Russia, because it was neglected.

ROGOZIN: Everything is clear to us. We have to be strong. Let them try to recognize our Kosovo. Let them even think about this. They will get rid of this habit after that. As regards Serbia: they deny Serbs the right to have respect for themselves. So Serbia has to draw some conclusions, to be strong. The EU is watching very closely for the reaction of the Serbian government. If they think they are dealing with plasteline, they will model it the way they want. But if they are dealing with a stone, they can't. You can break your teeth on a stone.

KC: What do you expect from the NATO summit in Bucharest in early April?

ROGOZIN: The NATO summit will be devoted to Afghanistan. Russia's contribution to Afghanistan's normalization process is huge. NATO will not fulfill any tasks there without us. We're not interested in their mission being unsuccessful there. So, we're helping them. We have to sit and negotiate: if they want our help in Afghanistan, why do they act as provocateurs in other regions? It's either-or. It's either they listen to us on anti-missile defence, on NATO enlargement, on Kosovo and we'll help them in Afghanistan. Or they will have quite a different song. President Vladimir Putin will definitely use the summit to state Russia's position on this issue.