

OPEN LETTER TO THE HONORABLE CONDOLEEZZA RICE, U.S. SECRETARY OF STATE

Re: Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

Dear Madame Secretary:

On behalf of the nation-wide membership of the undersigned organizations we write to you to express our strong concerns regarding the administration's continuing failure to properly address the name issue regarding the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) as it relates to our interests and that of our most important ally in the Balkans—Greece.

The U.S. has important interests in Southeast Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean. The projection of U.S. interests in the region depends heavily on the stability of the region. Therefore, the U.S. has an important stake in fostering good relations among neighboring countries in the region.

To this effect, Greece is of vital importance in the region by virtue of among other factors, its geographic location and by being home to the most important naval base in the Mediterranean Sea, Souda Bay, Crete. There are thousands of visits by U.S. military ships and planes to Souda Bay and its adjacent air base annually.

This sentiment has been expressed several times by our government in the past few years, by President Bush and by you, Madame Secretary.

Stability in the Balkans is not only critical for overall U.S. interests, but also because it serves the interests of every country in the Balkans.

Greece is by far the most stable country, politically and economically, in the Balkans and the biggest investor with over 22 billions dollars. By contrast, FYROM is of limited significance to the national security interests of the United States.

Yet, FYROM continues to provoke Greece, usurping history which has been Hellenic for thousands of years, while FYROM refuses to negotiate in good faith over the name issue. Unfortunately, actions over the years such as distortion of geographic maps, naming its airport "Alexander the Great," revisionist textbooks in schools, and inflammatory comments by top government officials, encourages new generations in FYROM to cultivate hostile sentiments against Greece. Further, this continuing systematic government policy will hinder FYROM's accession to both the EU and NATO. This is the real threat to stability in the Balkans, to the detriment of U.S. interests.

We wish to remind you that currently there are over 100 members of the Congress who have signed onto H.Res. 356, calling on FYROM to cease its "hostile activities or propaganda" against Greece.

As you prepare to meet today with Greece's Foreign Minister, Dora Bakoyianni, we know that a main topic on the agenda will be the FYROM name issue and how this continuing unresolved issue threatens the forthcoming expected application of FYROM to join NATO. Since this issue first arose back in the year 1991-1992 the Greek American community has been against a permanent name for the neighboring state which would include the name Macedonia/Macedonian. The U.S. supports FYROM's admission to NATO. Greece obviously objects to admission without a resolution to the name issue, and has stated it will use their veto, if necessary, which Greece is within her rights to exercise.

The immediate settlement of the name issue, in a way that is acceptable to Greece, will allow the United States' strongest ally in the Balkans to be the driving force for FYROM's membership to NATO and ultimately to the European Union.

FYROM's "passport" to NATO and the European Union is Greece.

Therefore, we call upon you, Madame Secretary, to please use your influence with FYROM to impress upon them to negotiate in good faith with Greece to resolve the name issue that would clearly differentiate that country from, Macedonia the northern province of Greece and its Hellenic history and for FYROM to cease immediately their irredentist propaganda against Greece, which violates the UN-brokered Interim Accord, as stated in Article 7 paragraph 1 of the Accord, signed in New York on September 13 1995 between FYROM and Greece. Only in this way will the interests of all parties be satisfied.

We write to you in the interests of the United States and for the support of our long-time and loyal ally Greece, who is our most important strategic partner in the region and the key country for stability in the region.

Respectfully yours,

Hellenic American National Council
Emmanuel Velivasakis, President
Theodore Spyropoulos, Honorary President

Pan-Macedonian Association, Inc. USA
Nina Gatzoulis, Supreme President

American Hellenic Institute
Gene Rossides, Founder of AHI
Nick Larigakis, Executive Director