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Have you heard the joke in Macedonia regarding the medal "8 Septemvri" you were awarded from the President? It says: "Why did Crvenkovski award Ambassador Hill?" The answer is: "Because he was very brave during the burning of the U.S. Embassy in Skopje". Would you like to comment please?

Oh, you think that's funny?

I don't know. It's a joke. Political. It is obvious that the U.S. role in Macedonia has changed from "burning of the Embassy" in 1999 to most reliable partner in 2008. How do you see Skopje now?

I am not sure I understood the joke, because there was not much comedy in that moment. It was very difficult moment. But I must say that even during that difficult time I always felt that we had a lot of support from the Macedonian people. After that terrible incident I was very pleased that we kept the Embassy open. As you know, we just closed it for a day to clean up the broken glass and move the burned vehicles out of the parking lot. I was pleased that it stayed open and I felt that over the course of the following days, weeks and even months we had a good relationship with the Macedonian people. I think that this good relationship has continued to carry on to this day. As you see, we are building a new embassy and this is an embassy that I think will be a real symbol of the importance that America attaches to this relationship here in Macedonia. We look forward to doing more things with the Macedonian people in the future.

How do you feel with this new award as an honorary citizen of Skopje?

I am very honored by it. I am a little surprised that I am back so soon to pick up another award. I want to stress that I do not need an award to come back to Macedonia. I really enjoy this country, and I am going to have a few hours to go visit Ohrid tomorrow morning. But I am very honored by it, indeed. Skopje is a city where I spent three very good years of my life, so it is great pleasure to receive this award.

What were the advantages and disadvantages of your life in Skopje?

It was hard work because we had this Kosovo crisis. I know it was a time of great uncertainty for the country and great concern for the people here. Those were the difficult aspects to it. On the positive side I always felt I had good relations here with political leaders. I had good access to people to convey my views and to hear people's views. Most of all, I really enjoyed living here, I enjoyed the time I had to spend with people and the opportunity to travel around the country.

What is your key experience from the work as a negotiator in a peace process? What is the main lesson a negotiator should learn? What would you consider the best finale of your engagement in the Korean nuclear process?

My Chinese colleague is always trying to tell me to be more patient. My Chinese colleague has a point, although sometimes I think that the Chinese has too much patience with the situation. I think that the important thing in any kind of negotiation is to thoroughly understand the viewpoint of the other side so that you can engage whether understanding their viewpoint and knowing your viewpoint whether you can find some compromise. The second point I would make is that in addition to patience and understanding the other person's point of view, you should be prepared to reach a compromise and you should not always insist on your own point of view.

Could you make a parallel between Korea negotiations and the Macedonia - Greece negotiations over the name issue?

I am not really in a position to talk in much detail on the Macedonian-Greek issue. We have other people in the U.S. Government concerned about that problem, in fact. The North Korea issue kind of keeps me very busy right now. Another point I'd make about negotiation is you really need to know all the details to make comments about it, so I'd rather not make a comment on these ongoing issues with Greece.

Does lobbying have power over the US foreign policy? Is there a possibility that the Greek lobby would influence the change in the US policy towards Macedonia, especially in the name issue?

Again, I don't want to get into the specifics of Greece and Macedonian issues, but as a general comment I am going to say that we have an open system, a system with a lot of transparency where people have an opportunity to weigh in with their views. In any foreign policy issue in the U.S. there are a lot of opinions that are factored in, but at the end of the day our own political leadership needs to look at the interests of the United States in pursuing our policy.

Do you think the US did enough to help Macedonia's bid for NATO membership before the Summit in Bucharest? Do you personally believe that Macedonia is facing a big injustice?

Again, I am not in a position to talk about that issue. If you had the opportunity to deal with North Korea, you would understand that there is not a lot of time to be examining the details of some issue many thousands of kilometers away. Again, I'll pass on that except to say that I do know the United States considers itself a very close and good friend of Macedonia and very much continues to support Macedonia's early entry into NATO. It's not my field--my field is Asia. I wish Macedonia were in Asia and I could deal with it, but it is not in Asia, it is in Europe.

Because you cannot answer this political question, I will ask you a sports question, OK?

I am always pleased to answer sports questions.

If there were a match between Macedonian and Greek basketball teams, whose side would you support?

That is not a sports question--that is a political question. It depends who plays better.

Thank you.