



EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES

SKOPJE • MACEDONIA



Deputy Secretary of State James B. Steinberg

Press availability

May 16, 2009

PM Nikola Gruevski: We just finished the meeting with the U.S. Deputy Secretary of State, James Steinberg. We discussed bilateral relations between the Republic of Macedonia and the United States, as well as our successful cooperation. It is exceptionally important that in the last few years the U.S. is our strategic partner and the cooperation between us is excellent. The United States supports Macedonia and together we participate in several international peacekeeping missions. We will continue this friendship and cooperation in the future. This friendship and cooperation so far have resulted in many joint projects, and we hope that in the future it will also result in our full-fledged membership in NATO, and that as NATO members we will continue to cooperate. We discussed several issues today about the situation in the Republic of Macedonia. Macedonia completed successful elections that were fair and democratic. We elected a president who is already functioning at full capacity and the country is preparing for its next steps. We also discussed regional issues, the situation in the region, the deepening of peace and cooperation in the region. Of course, we also discussed the issue of the name and Greece, on which we said that we are expecting the finalization of the elections in Greece, after which we would continue talks to find a solution. As I already mentioned, Macedonia continues to be a strategic partner with the United States. We continue our work with the missions in Afghanistan and all other types of cooperation for which there is need or interest. That would be all for now. We are satisfied with the visit of the Deputy Secretary to the Republic of Macedonia. Obviously, the Republic of Macedonia is a country they pay a lot of attention to and we are happy about that, we are satisfied with his visit. We hope in the future we will have great communication, cooperation, and joint projects for the success and progress of both our countries.

Deputy Secretary James Steinberg: Thank you very much Prime Minister, and thank you for hosting me on this visit. I am delighted to be here. It has been a long time since I have been in Macedonia, but I am delighted to be back and to share this fruitful discussion that we have had this afternoon. I was grateful for the opportunity to congratulate the Prime Minister on this very successful election that you have just completed and the continued work in building a strong, democratic, multi-ethnic Macedonia which is a powerful symbol to all in the region. We talked very much about how we can continue to work both here and throughout the Balkans to continue to build a stronger, more stable, more democratic region. I was delighted to reaffirm our strategic partnership. It is something that is of great importance to the United States and our bilateral cooperation across the broad range of issues--I think it brings great benefits to

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both countries. We are especially grateful for Macedonia's deep involvement in supporting our efforts in Afghanistan, your past support in Iraq, which was so valuable to us, in Bosnia, in Lebanon and elsewhere. It reflects a country which is not just consuming security but providing security to others, and that is a very important contribution that you make and we are grateful for. We look forward to deepening that strategic partnership as we deal with a broad range of issues in the regional and global front, including dealing with issues like terrorism and the like. We are, again, very grateful for the support that you have given us in Afghanistan. Your troops are performing magnificently and they are an important partner for us there. We have so much that we can do together, and ways that we can continue to strengthen that, and that is why we want to work with you to deepen your integration both into European and Trans-Atlantic structures. We think it is important to Macedonia's future and we want to be your partner in doing that, and we discussed--as the Prime Minister said--the way forward in how to do that, and how to resolve the differences that will allow you to walk through that very important door and secure the economy and political future of Macedonia. Once again, thank you very much for hosting me here and we look forward to many fruitful exchanges in the future.

Alpha TV: I have two questions. Mr. Steinberg, the first one is for you. Is your visit to Athens and Skopje part of the renewed interest of the United States and the new administration to resolve the name issue, and have you conveyed any direct messages on how to resolve this issue? For you Prime Minister--do your visit and busy agenda in Brussels, Paris, as well as today's visit of Deputy Steinberg mean that the Government of the Republic of Macedonia is entering a serious campaign, or perhaps better said activity, to close the name issue?

Deputy Secretary James Steinberg: Thank you for that question. I think my visit here is primarily to reinforce the important bilateral cooperation that we have between our two countries, to signal renewed interest by the United States in engagement in this region, which is so important to the United States and to Europe, and to put ourselves in a trajectory to continue to move forward throughout the region to strengthen democracy, economic growth, open markets and a stable region. We clearly had an opportunity to discuss the name issue. The United States strongly supports the efforts of Matthew Nimetz to try to help Greece and Macedonia come together on a resolution of that. We think it will benefit both countries and our primary role in this is to be supportive of that process and to encourage in any way the two sides to come to a common resolution of the problem.

PM Nikola Gruevski: I want to confirm once again that I as president of the Government, together with my team, have been making efforts to present our stand on the issue that was imposed by Greece, lobbying in that direction, and we have not stopped doing that, so the busy agenda of the last few days that you are referring to is a coincidence--that is how things developed. In the past two and a half to three years, we have always used every opportunity for activities that would help Macedonia, and this is what we will continue to do in the future.

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