



U.S. Recognizes Kosovo as Independent State

Secretary Condoleezza Rice

Washington, DC
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The United States has today formally recognized Kosovo as a sovereign and independent state. We congratulate the people of Kosovo on this historic occasion.

President Bush has responded affirmatively to a request from Kosovo to establish diplomatic relations between our two countries. The establishment of these relations will reaffirm the special ties of friendship that have linked together the people of the United States and Kosovo.

Nine years ago, the international community, led by NATO, acted to end brutal attacks on the Kosovar Albanian population. This timely international intervention ended the violence, leading to a United Nations Security Council decision to suspend Belgrade's governance and place Kosovo under interim UN administration. Since that time Kosovo has built its own democratic institutions separate from Belgrade's control. Last year, UN Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari developed a plan to build a democratic and multi-ethnic Kosovo and recommended Kosovo be independent, subject to a period of international supervision. In light of the conflicts of the 1990s, independence is the only viable option to promote stability in the region. The United States supports the Ahtisaari Plan and will work with its international partners to help implement it.

We welcome the commitments Kosovo made in its declaration of independence to implement the Ahtisaari Plan, to embrace multi-ethnicity as a fundamental principle of good governance, and to welcome a period of international supervision.

The unusual combination of factors found in the Kosovo situation -- including the context of Yugoslavia's breakup, the history of ethnic cleansing and crimes against civilians in Kosovo, and the extended period of UN administration -- are not found elsewhere and therefore make Kosovo a special case. Kosovo cannot be seen as a precedent for any other situation in the world today.

The United States takes this opportunity to reaffirm our friendship with Serbia, an ally during two world wars. We invite Serbia's leaders to work together with the United States and our partners to accomplish shared goals, such as the protection of the rights, security, culture and livelihood of the Serb community in Kosovo.

As Kosovo today begins its life as an independent state, the United States pledges to continue to be its close friend and partner.

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