



For Immediate Release
Office of the Press Secretary
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President Bush Discusses Kosovo

Kilimanjaro Hotel Kempinski
Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

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7:24 A.M. (L)

THE PRESIDENT: Good morning. Sunday, the people of Kosovo declared their independence. They have asked the United States for diplomatic recognition, and yesterday the United States formally recognized Kosovo as a sovereign and independent nation.

In its declaration of independence Kosovo committed itself to the highest standards of democracy, including freedom and tolerance and justice for citizens of all ethnic backgrounds. These are principles that honor human dignity, they are values America looks for in a friend, and soon we will establish full diplomatic relations with the new nation of Kosovo.

We will work with the leaders of Kosovo to carry out a smooth and peaceful transition to independence. America welcomes Kosovo's pledges to fully implement the plan of United Nations Special Envoy Ahtisaari, and to accept a period of international supervision. We encourage Kosovo's leaders to quickly adopt the provisions of the Ahtisaari plan, especially those designed to safeguard the rights of Kosovo's non-Albanian communities.

The independence of Kosovo is an historic step for the Balkans region. It presents an opportunity to move beyond the conflicts of the past and toward a future of freedom and stability and peace. The United States and the European Union must seize this opportunity to offer all the nations of this region the prospect of integration into the political, economic and security structure of the Euro Atlantic community. In this way, all the people of the Balkans will be able to see the promise of a better life for themselves and for their children.



Thank you. I'll answer a couple of questions. Mark.

Q Mr. President, isn't this a poke in the eye to Vladimir Putin and the others who say you're approving of secession movements everywhere implicitly?

THE PRESIDENT: Actually, we have been working very closely with the Russians, as we have with the Europeans and other nations on the -- on Kosovo's independence, because we believe it's the right thing to do. You know, there's a disagreement, but we believe, as do many other nations, that this is -- history will prove this to be a correct move, to bring peace to the Balkans.

This strategy has been a long time coming. Yesterday, for example, we had a -- worked out with our European allies the sequencing of it, to make sure that there was a concerted and constant voice supporting this move. The United States supports this move because we believe it will bring peace. And now it's up to all of us to work together to help the Kosovars realize that peace. And it's important for us to remind Kosovo -- which I have just done -- that they must honor their commitments to support the rights of non-Albanians, non-Kosovars' rights inside the country.

Q Mr. President --

THE PRESIDENT: Excuse me. Hans.

Q Mr. President, thank you very much. When you talk about the sequencing of events, did you withhold the endorsement, the recognition, and wait until this morning for any particular reasons, or as a favor to the Russians?

THE PRESIDENT: No, Hans, as I told you, we worked with the European nations. We had -- this strategy was well planned. And the endorsement, by the way, wasn't held until this morning, it was issued last night by the State Department, as I mentioned in my remarks.

But it was a way for us to create an effect that showed that the world was -- many in the world were very supportive of the independence of Kosovo. Our position has been very clear all along. At the G8, for example, I expressed -- or in Albania I expressed my position very clearly, so it shouldn't come as a surprise to anybody.

What you may be interested in knowing is that we have been in close consultation with the Russians all along. This wasn't a surprise to Russia. And you know, today's announcement is simply putting an exclamation point onto a series of announcements that have been made over the last 24 hours.

Thank you all very much. See you in Rwanda.

END 7:28 A.M. (L)

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