



**Assistant Secretary Daniel Fried interview with Kanal 5 TV
September 24, 2008**

Kanal 5: Where do you see room for consensus, bearing in mind the two sides are opposed on this issue?

A/S Fried: They are, but both sides have actually begun to move a little bit. As I said, we are not the negotiator. I think there are people in both governments who want to see a deal, there are people acting in good faith and I think it is Matt Nimetz's job to try to come up with ways forward and we support him.

Kanal 5: What was your message to the Macedonian Foreign Minister and can you tell us what the message of Secretary Rice to Minister Bakoyannis was?

A/S Fried: Well, I would say the following- we want an agreement, we do not exercise pressure, that is not our job. Your minister is a friend and the United States sees a solution as something that would help the security of Macedonia, of the Balkans, and is in our interest. It was a friendly meeting. I understand the difficulties the Macedonian leadership is facing and I want to help.

Kanal 5: Do you think progress is possible in this period?

A/S Fried: Well, I hope so. We have some work to do, but I think the people of Macedonia want an agreement that preserves their dignity also. I think, of course, that is important, but getting into NATO and a road to the European Union is awfully important. That's the real prize. That means that Macedonia's future as a European country is secure. That's a great thing. That's a great achievement if you can do it.

Kanal 5: Do you think there is any chance to convince the Greek side that the Macedonian identity and language are very important for Macedonia?

A/S Fried: I think the Greek officials who follow this issue understand how difficult this is for Macedonia as well. And the Greeks – I think the Greeks want a solution. Of course you want a solution too. It's a question of finding a solution that works for both sides. Matt Nimetz is trying his best, we support him. But I have to be clear, there is no American plan, there is no alternative.

Kanal 5: What is going to change with the coming of the new administration, in the attempts of America to help this process, and in the attitude towards Macedonia?

A/S Fried: I think, to be honest, every American administration has been friendly to your country and whether it is Obama or McCain, the next American president will be a friend of Macedonia. But, I also have to be honest, I can guarantee that the next American president is not going to know as much as President Bush does about the name issue. He really understands this. He has spoken to the leaders, he has listened to their arguments, he asks me how I am doing, he follows this. And the fact is, the next American President, whoever it is, is going to not really turn to this right away, and you know it. So I think it is a good time to try to make a deal now when the American President is actually very knowledgeable personally about this, as President Bush is.

Kanal 5: So maybe the whole process is going to be postponed for one year?

A/S Fried: Well, I hope not, I hope not. I think right now we have a good window to solve this and it isn't going to get any easier with time, you know that.

Kanal 5: What would you say that the risk would be for Macedonia if we remain outside of EU and NATO for too long because of this issue?

A/S Fried: Well, let's put it this way. NATO membership is security, EU membership is prosperity and reform. How long does Macedonia want to be without institutional security and without prosperity and reform that the EU brings? It is in your interest to join. Isn't that what Macedonian patriots have always wanted? And now, it has never been closer. It is so close you can reach out and you can touch it. It's almost there. Just take that step.

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