

Hellenic Electronic Center (HEC)

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June 15, 2009 Ivica Bosevski continues to depict FYROM as a victim while continuing to ignore his government's unrelenting provocations against Greece. The refusal of his government to make reasonable concessions that are consistent with historical and geographical realities in the Balkans is precisely the reason why this dispute with Greece remains alive. Over the past year, media reports circulating have stated that Skopje has been building memorials to Alexander the Great throughout the territory of FYROM. American and European officials have in fact criticized the government in Skopje for antagonizing Greece with these pathetic gestures. The position of the Greek government is solidly based on factual historical and archeological realities with regard to the name and heritage of Macedonia. Greece has made substantive gestures toward the government in Skopje by establishing diplomatic relations and Greek businessmen have contributed to the economy of this neighboring State by investing in it. In return, Skopje has responded to Athens with gestures of utter contempt and disdain. Surely, Mr. Bosevski and his colleagues are aware of the rights of Greece to the Macedonian heritage, and to the strong feelings of the Greek public toward their past history and present borders.

Yet, Mr. Bosevski and his colleagues continue with their intransigent position and continued provocations at the expense of a potential friendship which could lead to the prosperity of both countries. All the government in Skopje needs to do is recognize what numerous scholars and academics have long since known, that Alexander the Great and the Macedonian heritage are irrefutably Greek. The comments of Mr. Bosevski that most citizens in his country have never traveled abroad are quite revealing in that their isolation from the world explains that they have never been exposed to objective evidence with regard to Macedonia, only the propaganda from within.

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<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2009/jun/12/embassy-row-22885923/>

EMBASSY ROW - WASHINGTON TIMES

By

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NO NAMES, PLEASE

The new deputy prime minister of Macedonia declined repeatedly Thursday to discuss the one issue that is keeping his country out of NATO and the European Union.

Ivica Bocevski told reporters at the National Press Club that the dispute with Greece over the formal name of his nation is the responsibility of other Macedonian officials, who are negotiating with their Greek counterparts.

Greece objects to the use of the name, Macedonia, because it is a region in modern Greece and historically associated with Alexander the Great. Although Alexander was born in the capital of ancient Macedonia, his birthplace has long been part of modern Greece.

Greeks say Macedonia hijacked the name to establish a stronger claim to Alexander, even naming the national airport after the Greek conqueror and planning an eight-story-high statue of Alexander in the Macedonian capital, Skopje.

Greece continues to object to Macedonia's membership in NATO and the European Union until

the name dispute is settled. The country was admitted to the United Nations under the provisional name of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

The United States and more than 120 other nations recognize the country as Macedonia.

Mr. Bocevski, on his first visit to Washington as deputy prime minister, talked around the name dispute, as he complained of problems from Macedonia's isolation from European institutions.

He noted that his mother traveled throughout Europe on a Yugoslav passport when Macedonia was a province in the former communist nation. But since independence in 1991, Macedonians have been required to get visas to visit other European countries because the nation is not part of the European Union.

Mr. Bocevski, who will turn 32 next week, said most of his generation of Macedonians have never traveled outside their small Balkan nation.

"Closing the borders has also closed the minds of a generation of Macedonia," he said, adding that the isolation can cause a political backlash against Europe.

"Macedonians could fall prey to xenophobes and populists in the region," Mr. Bocevski said. "Closing the region has only made the situation worse."

He is meeting with State Department officials and members of Congress and speaking at a conference on Macedonia.