

**Hellenic Electronic Center (HEC)
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36 Hellenic associations in the US and abroad March 7, 2008**

The following letter is in response to the March 6 article by Mark Tran which omits many details, thus obscuring the nature of the dispute between Greece and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM). The NATO alliance is intended to protect the territorial integrity of its members. Extremist elements in FYROM have made no secret that they covet Greek territory. Mr. Tran fails to mention that quite recently, Skopje sought to name its airport after Alexander the Great.

Greece has demonstrated good will for Skopje by establishing diplomatic relations, and by extending economic support for the neighboring State. In turn, the government of FYROM has adopted an intransigent position by continuing to claim the name and historical and cultural heritage of Macedonia. During the past seventeen years, when negotiations should have led to a satisfactory settlement irredentists in Skopje distributed maps that displayed a greater FYROM that included the Greek province of Macedonia. In addition, the government of Skopje displayed the Hellenic Sun of Vergina on its flag in 1992, thus exacerbating tensions with Greece.

Greek blood was shed for the liberation of Macedonia twice during the twentieth century. First, during the Balkan Wars when Macedonia was liberated from centuries of Ottoman Turkish slavery, and secondly, following the conclusion of the Greek Civil War when Marshall Tito's plans for annexing Macedonia from Greece through his support for the Communist insurgency was thwarted. Greece has the right to protect its territory, history, and cultural and national identity from the aggressive designs that have been repeatedly put forward by Skopje. As such, a Greek veto over the candidacy to NATO of FYROM is justified as a means of self defense and national survival.

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http://blogs.guardian.co.uk/news/2008/03/greeks_see_red_over_macedonia.html

GUARDIAN BLOGS (UK)

NEWS BLOG

Mark Tran

Greeks see red over Macedonia name

Nato's expansion in the Balkans could go off the rails if Greece and Macedonia can't agree a solution to the naming problem

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What's in a name? A lot if it is Macedonia. The row over the only former Yugoslav republic to gain its independence without bloodshed must rank as one of the world's craziest diplomatic disputes.

Macedonia's desire to join Nato - along with Croatia and Albania at a summit early next month - has given the spat new life, with Greece threatening to veto Macedonia's application unless it finds something else to call itself.

The row boils down to Greece's refusal, ever since Macedonia broke away from the former Yugoslavia in 1991, to accept the name Republic of Macedonia. Greece rejects the name on the grounds that it implies territorial ambitions towards Greece's own northern province of Macedonia, birthplace of Alexander the Great.

Greece felt so strongly about the issue that it imposed an economic embargo that nearly destroyed the economy of the small country (population 2.1 million). Greece lifted the blockade in 1995, only after Macedonia declared that it had no claims on Greek territory and dropped an ancient Greek motif from its flag.

But the two countries never settled the issue of Macedonia's name. While Macedonia wants to be known as the Republic of Macedonia; Greece insists on the clunky 'Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia', or Fyrom for short.

If the row was confined to just Greece and Macedonia, the world's diplomatic brains would leave these two to their own devices. But this is the Balkans, where mind-bending diplomatic complexities are commonplace (think Bosnia, Serbia and Kosovo).

Greece, however, seems to be fighting a losing battle: about 100 countries now recognise the small Balkan country as such.

The UN has even appointed a mediator to solve this diplomatic conundrum. Matthew Nimetz has come up with five alternative names to Macedonia: Constitutional Republic of Macedonia, Democratic Republic of Macedonia, Independent Republic of Macedonia, New Republic of Macedonia, and Republic of Upper Macedonia. So far no deal.

"Neither government was able to feel comfortable with all the ideas I proposed" for a negotiated settlement, the hapless Nimetz said after talks with a senior Greek diplomat in the northern city of Thessaloniki, where thousands of Greeks turned out in protest against Macedonia's name. Counter-demonstrations, of course, took place in Skopje, the Macedonian capital.

Can you help out the UN with your suggestions for a name for Macedonia that could satisfy Athens?

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