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**BALKAN REGIONAL PROFILE: THE SECURITY SITUATION AND THE
REGION-BUILDING EVOLUTION OF SOUTHEASTERN EUROPE**

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I. Introduction

Southeastern Europe continued its stable and constructive trends during May with Slovenia's accession to the EU. PfP candidates received clear signs that joining the Program means fulfilling certain criteria, for which a national effort was required. The security of the region continued to be determined by local developments and by the situation in areas where Southeastern European states are already involved or will soon be involved, mainly Afghanistan and Iraq. US President George Bush's invitation to the leaders of Afghanistan, Algeria, Bahrain, Jordan, Yemen, and Turkey to attend the G-8 summit meeting in the US reflects a new awareness by the most powerful industrial nations of the world of the growing role of the countries with clear democratic dispositions and situated in the Greater Middle East region. The latter is directly adjacent to Southeastern Europe, and the effects of developments in this area are felt strongly in the Balkans. Depending on the extent to which the deficiencies of the past can be overcome, and depending on their involvement in the Euro-Atlantic institutions, the Balkan countries are to varying degrees aware of the external problems that influence the Southeastern European neighborhood.

The countries involved in the occupation of Iraq (Albania, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Hungary, Moldova, and Romania) analyze the situation in that country from a Southeastern European perspective. UN involvement would hardly make the task easier. The attacks on UN officials and their offices last year confirmed that the UN is disliked by most Iraqis. That is why, according to ISIS, a combination of factors could prove more effective in changing the situation there, leading to a certain level of success for the UN too: 1) A tight cooperation between the US-UK led forces and France and Germany, that will also eventually include Russia, India, and China, including on a military-to-military level. 2) Actively involving Iraqi armed forces and police as well as local leaders in the stabilization of the security situation. 3) Changing the occupation forces' military basing in Iraq. In such a new situation, the UN might be able to help in preparing fair elections in Iraq by the beginning of next year.

This month, the upcoming Olympics were the focus of security forces' attention in the region and beyond. The most closely-guarded ever, the Greek Olympics have already generated paranoia in some external participants, and their claims about inadequate

security are causing irritation in the host nation. Terrorist attacks and counter-terrorism measures were big security issues in the Balkans in May.

II. Security Threats and Post-Conflict Developments in the Balkans

1. Terrorism and the Post-Conflict Rehabilitation of Iraq and Afghanistan

a. Terrorism

1) Greece. On 5 May, three powerful bombs detonated at a police department in the center of Athens. One policeman was injured. On 13 May, two home-made bombs burst in front of the Alpha bank and another one was found in front of the British HSBC bank. The illegal 'Revolutionary People's Struggle' group took responsibility for these bombings. In a statement to the Greek press, the group declared: "All the senior members of the international capitalist system, from multinationals to businessmen, mercenaries from across the world and state officials, as well as wealthy western Olympic tourists who plan to attend the Games, are undesirables."¹ The Greek government said it was not disturbed by these threats at all and played down the incidents. It issued reassuring statements saying that the Olympics would be safe. The Greek public is largely opposed to the foreign terror hysteria concerning the Olympics.

2) NATO-Greece. A NATO spokesman said on 5 May that the terrorist attacks in Athens were focusing minds on security at the Olympic Games. NATO has agreed to act as a conduit for intelligence and other security-related information between Greece and the other 25 NATO members.

3) US-Greece. (1) US Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge met with Greece's Public Order Minister, Giorgos Voulgarakis in Washington on 5 May. The US official offered for three US counter-terrorism experts to join the bombing investigation after the blast in Athens on the same day. (2) US President Bush met with Greek Prime Minister Kostas Karamanlis in Washington on 20 May. According to an official US statement, "President Bush said Greece is making 'very good progress' in preparing for a successful and secure summer Olympics in Athens and that he is grateful for the 'very close cooperation' and hard work of the Greek government on this matter. Karamanlis said Greece was doing

¹ Quoted by AFP news agency , 13 May 2004.

‘everything humanly possible in terms of energy, resources, professionals, to secure really successful Games, and I’m confident that we’ll succeed.’”²

4) Greece-Bulgaria. A delegation from the Bulgarian Ministry of the Interior participated in a global security conference on the Athens Olympics from 23-25 May. Bulgarian and Greek experts agreed on counter-terrorist measures between the two countries during the Games. At the 8th Annual Conference on Security of the Sofia-based Rakovsky Defense and Staff College on 20 May, General Boyko Borisov, chief secretary of the Ministry of Interior, said that his ministry would coordinate its counter-terrorist activity for the Olympic Games with the Bulgarian armed forces and the Ministry of Defense.

5) US-Bulgaria. The Bulgarian Ministry of the Interior announced on 24 May that a FBI team of two agents would take up work in Bulgaria on 18 June. The chief secretary of the ministry, General Boyko Borisov met with local representatives of the US FBI on 24 May in Athens. This cooperation between the Bulgarian security services and the FBI is aimed at strengthening security during the Olympic Games in Greece. The longer-term purpose of the cooperation is countering terrorism, organized crime, drugs trafficking, human trafficking, and money forgery.

6) Bosnia and Herzegovina. In the beginning of May, the US authorities designated three Saudi foundations operating in Bosnia and Herzegovina as ‘terrorist’ groups. Among these foundations were the ‘al-Haramain’ and ‘al-Taybah’ charities. The bank accounts of these organisations have been frozen.

7) NATO-Bulgaria. Bulgarian Deputy Prime Minister Plamen Panayotov told the 8th Annual Conference on Security of the Rakovski Defense College on 20 May that as a NATO and future EU country, Bulgaria would help deter the threats of terrorism and illegal trafficking of humans, arms, and drugs.

8) Turkey. (1) Four bombs were detonated in front of the British HSBC banks in Ankara and Istanbul on 16 May, hours before British Prime Minister Tony Blair began an official visit to Turkey. There were no injuries. (2) On 19 May, the Turkish press claimed that al-Qaida was preparing terrorist attacks during the NATO summit meeting on 28-29 June in Istanbul. The US CIA has warned the Turkish Police Directorate-General and suggested

increased intelligence activity in the city. According to the CIA, al-Qaida has managed to ship explosives from Northern Iraq to Istanbul. Earlier, on 3 May, the Turkish police had arrested nine suspected members of the terrorist group 'Ansar al-Islam', which some say has connections with al-Qaida.

b. Post-Conflict Rehabilitation of Iraq

1) The Situation in and around Iraq. (1) US National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice warned in an interview with the Spanish daily "El Pais" on 18 May that an intercepted letter from suspected al-Qaida operative Abu Musab al-Zarqawi indicated that he was planning to instigate a civil war before the handover of power to Iraqis on 30 June. The closer the country was to sovereign rule, the harder the situation would become, said Rice. (2) Iran will have a major role in the future developments in Iraq. Some players in Washington are pushing for a pragmatic approach to the clerical regime in Tehran. The designated US Ambassador to Iraq, John Negroponte, is said to have "impressed upon the White House the need for Iran's help in dealing with Iraq".³ Syria is another concern. On 11 May, the US government imposed sanctions on Damascus for allegedly backing radical anti-Israeli groups, allowing anti-coalition fighters to cross from Syria into Iraq, and pursuing weapons of mass destruction. President Bush signed the order that banned all US exports to Syria other than food and medicine, severing of US banking ties with the Commercial Bank of Syria, and the freezing of assets of Syrians suspected of involvement in terrorism-related activities. Soon after the sanctions were imposed, the EU sent a trade delegation to Syria in a political and economic compensation to a major EU Euro-Mediterranean partner. (3) After the Abu Ghraib prison scandal, two US strategic thinkers, Ivo Daalder and Anthony Lake, said that the US could no longer offer a solution in Iraq, but had become part of the problem. They suggested five steps for improving the situation: a) The resignation of US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Richard Meyers. b) Re-impose the constraints of the rule of law at the domestic and international levels. c) Creating a legitimate, i.e. elected, government in Iraq that is capable of meeting the most immediate political, security, and economic needs of the Iraqi people. d) Deployment of more troops than those simply needed to hold on against the insurgency. A more robust effort should

³ Guy Dinmore, „Washington shows signs of softer stance on Iran”, Financial Times, 13 May 2004.

be made to train an Iraqi police and military force that would eventually take over. e) The political authorities and the security forces are in desperate need of becoming truly internationalized, which means asking the UN and NATO for more help. (4) The US plan for stabilizing the situation in Iraq was announced on 24 May by President Bush: a) Handover of authority to a sovereign Iraqi government on 30 June. b) Help establish the stability and security in Iraq that democracy requires. c) Continue rebuilding Iraq's infrastructure. d) Encourage more international support. e) Move toward free, national elections that will bring forward new leaders empowered by the Iraqi people. f) An official statement US policy statement says: "To provide the necessary security for the fledgling Iraqi democracy, the United States will maintain a troop level at the current 138,000 'as long as necessary,' the president said.⁴ A White House fact sheet lists the following accomplishments of the occupation forces: "The Coalition has helped refurbish more than 2,200 schools, 240 hospitals and 1,200 health clinics, repair bridges, upgrade the electrical grid, and modernize the communications system. Oil production is now more than 2 million barrels a day, bringing revenues of nearly \$6 billion so far this year -⁵ - which is being used to help the people of Iraq." National elections are planned for January 2005. The head of the UN electoral assistance team, Carina Pirelli, said on 3 May that the election process in Iraq was ahead of schedule and Iraqis that throughout the country were eager for elections to be held.

2) Preparation for a New UNSC Resolution. "The United States and United Kingdom introduced a draft resolution to the U.N. Security Council May 24 that would endorse the transfer of sovereignty from the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) to an Iraqi interim government and provide for a multinational security force to remain in the country after June 30."⁶ Elections should be held in Iraq by 31 January 2005 at the latest, and a Transitional National Assembly would draft a constitution. A UN Assistance Mission to Iraq (UNAMI) will be formed to help the interim Iraqi government and assembly. The initial reactions of the UNSC permanent members to the draft resolution showed

⁴ White House press release, 25 May 2004: <http://www.uspolicy.be/Article.asp?ID=F55BE8BA-7551-4851-B5E1-0754F39FF41D>

⁵ White House "Fact sheet: The transition in Iraq": <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2004/05/20040524-4.html>

⁶ Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) press release, 24 May 2004: http://www.cpa-iraq.org/pressreleases/20040524_UN_resolution.html

differences of positions, and the resolution's chances of succeeding were not seen as high. UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan said that he considered the draft resolution a good basis for discussion.

3) Bulgaria. In May Bulgaria sent 12 soldiers to Kerbala in Iraq to reinforce the second Bulgarian battalion. In two months, they will join the ranks of the third Bulgarian battalion in Iraq. After his visit to Iraq in the end of April, Bulgarian President Georgi Parvanov asked US President Bush for help in the city of Kerbala, which is occupied by Bulgarian peacekeepers.

c. Post-Conflict Rehabilitation of Afghanistan. (1) The North Atlantic Council (NAC) paid a first visit to Afghanistan from 26-27 April, as NATO prepared to expand its missions in the country. NAC met with President Hamid Karzai and other officials and discussed preparations for the September parliamentary and presidential elections. The visit demonstrated NATO's commitment to Afghanistan. However, a sufficiently stable environment can only be achieved with more troops. (2) NATO Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, speaking on 14 May in Sofia, demanded an increase of Bulgaria's peacekeeping contingents under NATO command, including the one in Afghanistan. Scheffer declared that the idea of establishing a NATO fund for supporting its own missions would be considered at the June summit in Istanbul. (3) According to Bulgarian Ministry of Defense sources, the army's 66-strong contingent in Afghanistan will be increased to 100. Scheffer's call for increasing the contribution to the NATO-led ISAF force in Afghanistan was addressed to all NATO members. Apart from Bulgaria, Belgium decided to double its troops to 600. The deadline for the formation of five new provincial reconstruction teams (PRT) is 30 June.

2. Post-Conflict Developments in the Balkans

a. Kosovo. On 25 May, UNMIK chief Harri Holkeri (a 64-year-old from Finland) resigned for health reasons. The position of UNMIK chief is very difficult, and will probably be doomed to failure for some years to come. **b. Bosnia and Herzegovina.** (1) In the end of April, Bosnia's constituent Serbian, Croatian, and Muslim armed forces held an exercise under joint command. The exercise took one day, and 4'000 soldiers, policemen, and rescue workers took part in it. Bosnia and Herzegovina wants to join the PfP Program. In assessing the exercise, Bosnian Defense Minister Nikola Radovanovic

underlined the importance of pointing the joint efforts in the right direction. (2) The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the US armed forces, General Richard Myers, visited the US contingent in Bosnia and Herzegovina on 4 May. Myers said the US was a steadfast NATO partner that "remains dedicated to the goal of peace throughout the Balkans." US forces, he added, "will remain a strong, steady presence" in Bosnia-Herzegovina as its people "begin to take a larger role in their own futures."⁷

(3) On 25 May, NATO Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer said that Bosnia and Herzegovina was unlikely to be invited to join NATO's PfP Program at the Istanbul summit in June. A day earlier Sarajevo had officially applied for PfP membership. NATO argued that Bosnia and Herzegovina was not cooperating enough with the ICTY court in The Hague, and war criminal Radovan Karadzic was being protected by local police. Until this issue is solved, Bosnia and Herzegovina will be kept out of the PfP.

III. The National Perspectives of the Balkan Countries: Specific Issues

1. Turkey. The international press freedom organization 'Reporters Without Borders' on 25 May protested two recent cases in Turkey involving jail sentences and large fines. In one case, a Turkish journalist was sentenced to 15 months in jail for "insulting the memory" of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Turkish Republic. In the other case, the daily "Vakit" was ordered to pay €500'000 in damages to 312 generals in the Turkish Army for publishing an article in which the author condemned the incompetence of top-ranking officers without naming any of them. "Journalists daring to criticize government institutions or to broach taboo subjects, like the Kurdish question or the role of the army in the country's political life, are censored, abusively taken to court and subjected to heavy penalties", 'Reporters Without Borders' said, noting that four journalists "are currently in jail for doing their jobs".

2. Croatia. The ICTY in The Hague on 20 May indicted retired Croatian General Mirko Norac for war crimes committed in the early 1990s, including crimes against humanity (persecutions on political, racial, or religious grounds), murder, and violation of the laws or customs of war. The indictment charged Norac with "the unlawful killing of Serb

⁷ US Armed Forces Press Service release, 10 May 2004:
<http://belgrade.usembassy.gov/current/040511.html>

civilians and captured and/or wounded soldiers from the Medak pocket” – Croatian territory held by rebel ethnic Serbs – during 1993. Norac acted individually and/or in concert with others, including Janko Bobetko and Rahem Ademi. Currently, Norac is serving a 12-year prison sentence imposed by a local court in 2003 for organizing the execution of at least 50 ethnic Serb civilians in 1991.

IV. State of Bilateral, Multilateral, and Regional Relations in the Balkans

1. Bilateral Relations

a. Greece-Turkey. Turkish Prime Minister Tayyip Recep Erdogan visited Greece from 6-7 May and met with his Greek counterpart Kostas Karamanlis. This was Erdogan’s first official visit to Greece. The Turkish prime minister visited Western Thrace, which is populated variously by a Muslim population (according to Greek terminology), ethnic Turks (according to Turkish terminology), or Bulgarian Muslims/Pomaks (according to Bulgarian historiography). Erdogan’s visit took place immediately after Cyprus’ accession to the EU –in which Greek Cypriots, by rejecting the referendum for the unification of the island, barred Turkish Cypriots from becoming EU members. Erdogan participated in the accession ceremony of the new EU members in Dublin on 1 May and acknowledged the existence of the Cypriot Greek republic – which Ankara had previously never done in public. Though bilateral relations improved after 1999, three issues continue to be disputed: the Aegean Sea continental shelf, the delimitation of airspace over the Aegean Sea, and the future of Cyprus. Turkey hopes to receive, by the end of 2004, a clear deadline from the EU for launching accession negotiations. Greece is among the countries officially backing Turkey’s candidacy for EU membership.

b. Turkey-Bulgaria. (1) Bulgarian Prime Minister Simeon Coburgotski visited Edrine (Odrin) in the European part of Turkey on 9 May. The visit aimed at improving trans-border cooperation between the neighboring regions. (2) Bulgarian Foreign Minister Solomon Passy visited Turkey from 25-26 May and met with Turkish President Ahmet Sezer, Prime Minister Tayyip Recep Erdogan and Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul. Bilateral and regional issues were discussed, as were relations with the EU and NATO. The two neighboring states have in the last two years registered a high degree of effectiveness in their joint fight against drugs, human trafficking, and terrorism. Turkey

promised to make an effort within the Organization of the Islamic Conference to save the lives of the five Bulgarian medics and one Palestinian doctor sentenced to death and unjustly blamed for a HIV virus infection in a hospital in Libya with a long record of unhygienic conditions (import and use of donated blood from African countries without testing it for HIV, etc.).

c. Croatia-Bulgaria. Bulgarian Foreign Minister Solomon Passy, also acting as CIO of the OSCE, made a two-day visit to Croatia on 10-11 May. He met with his counterpart Miomir Zuzul, Prime Minister Ivo Sanader, President Stipe Mesic, and the leadership of the Croatian Parliament. Cooperation with the OSCE and the integration of Croatia into NATO and the EU were the main topics of the discussions. Passy attended a ceremony for a return of refugees to Zadar after the 1991-95war.

d. Croatia-Serbia and Montenegro. The president of Serbia and Montenegro, Svetozar Marovic, visited Croatia for a first official visit by a Serbian leader to the neighboring state since it declared independence from Yugoslavia in 1991. He met with Croatian President Stipe Mesic. A reconciliation process was initiated at a meeting between the two leaders in 2003. The presidents discussed their countries' bids for EU membership. The unsolved issue of refugees' returns was also on the bilateral agenda. Croatia is making an effort to reconstruct Serbian houses destroyed by Zagreb during the war. The EU has made the launch of accession negotiations with Croatia dependent on the country's protection of minority rights. The two presidents also discussed border and visa issues. Serbia has indicted eleven soldiers for the killing of some 200 Croatian prisoners of war in 1991 in eastern Croatia. Six other Serbian soldiers are on trial for atrocities committed in Vukovar in 1991. While Croatia is a strong NATO candidate, Belgrade does not envisage applying for NATO membership soon. NATO's PfP program is a more short-term foreign political target of Serbia and Montenegro – and it may be reached if Croatia successfully cooperates with the ICTY in The Hague.

2. Regional Relations: The Stability Pact for Southeastern Europe

On 20 May the coordinator of the Stability Pact for Southeastern Europe, Erhard Busek, reported to the Permanent Council of the OSCE on the implementation of key tasks of the

Pact. The return of refugees and internally displaced persons remains the focus of the Pact, and it is continuing its pressure on regional authorities to solve this issue. This question is of key importance to come to terms with the past in the region. The Pact of Stability continues its joint efforts with the countries from the bottom-up Process for Cooperation and Security in Southeastern Europe in combating crime and corruption. The Pact of Stability is expected to place more emphasis on combating human trafficking in the future.

V. The Economic Situation in the Balkan Countries and in the Region

1. Bulgaria. On 3 May, Bulgarian Prime Minister Simeon Coburgotski announced in the town of Belovo on the Danube the decision of the government that the nuclear plant “Belene” will be constructed. This would be the biggest investment project in Bulgaria of the last twenty years. Four international consortia for nuclear plant construction are bidding for the project. The new nuclear plant is expected to be operational in 2009-2010. Thus, Bulgaria will preserve its critical electric energy capacity that guarantees the energy security of the Balkans for many years to come, including in areas of concern such as Kosovo, Macedonia, and others.

2. Turkey. Turkey began work on 9 May on the construction of a tunnel under the Bosphorus, 55 meters below sea bottom. The tunnel will be 13.3 kilometers long and is conceived as a part of the Silk Road (TRACECA corridor) linking Asia and Europe. The project is expected to be completed in 2008 and will cost US\$2-2.8 billion. Japanese and Turkish companies will carry out the main construction work. The World Bank (WB) will partly subsidize the project.

3. WB-Romania. The World Bank (WB) on 20 May approved a US\$150 million IBRD loan and a US\$7 million Global Environment Facility (GEF) grant to Romania to reduce its vulnerability to natural disasters. According to the US State Department, “Romania is severely exposed to a range of natural disasters, particularly earthquakes and floods. The Hazard Risk Mitigation and Emergency Preparedness project will help Romania reduce the risk of these and other natural disasters, as well as accidental catastrophic mining spills of pollutants. It includes projects to improve communications and emergency

response systems and to implement risk reduction measures. The grant is requested from the WB for the first time by a government prior to a catastrophic event.”⁸

4. ExIm Bank-Albania. On 24-25 May, ExIm Bank Chairman Philip Merrill met with Albanian Prime Minister Fatos Nano and other officials as well as business and financial leaders in Tirana. The ExIm Bank chief said that both Albania and the US were interested increasing exports to Albania. The Bank can play a key role in supporting US exporters and Albanian buyers.⁹

5. WB - Serbia and Montenegro. On 26 May, the World Bank approved “a \$55 million credit to help improve transport infrastructure in Serbia and Montenegro, as well as a \$30 million credit to help build a more effective property registration and cadastre -- property tax record -- system aimed at contributing to the development of effective real property markets.”¹⁰

VI. The Process of Differentiated Integration in Southeastern Europe in EU and NATO

1. EU

a. EU-Southeastern Europe. On 1 May, Slovenia officially joined the EU together with nine other European countries. French President Jacques Chirac and German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder declared their full support for the plans of Bulgaria and Romania to join the EU in 2007. Romanian Prime Minister Adrian Nastase met with the French president in Paris. According to Schröder, the accession of Bulgaria and Romania would guarantee security and stability in the Balkans. According to Baroness Emma Nicholson, Deputy Chair of the Foreign Affairs Commission of the European Parliament, Bulgaria will have no problems with completing its accession negotiations in 2004 and joining the EU in 2007. If Bucharest cannot finish the negotiations this year, there will be problems with the 2007 date, Nicholson said in Brussels. Turkey is expected to receive a signal from the EU by the end of 2004 concerning Turkey’s eligibility for accession negotiations with the EU. Croatia hopes to start EU accession negotiations in a few months.

⁸ US State Department press release: <http://www.usembassy.ro/WF/100/eur121.htm>

⁹ ExIm Bank press release: <http://www.exim.gov/pressrelease.cfm/C17D4CCE-A46E-3001-2E65F6A51CBD0385/>

¹⁰ US State Department press release, www.usembassy.ro/WF/300/eur318.htm.

b. EU-Bulgaria. It was announced in Brussels on 25 May that the EU was preparing a new joint position document to be sent to the authorities in Libya in support of the five Bulgarian medics and one Palestinian doctor, also a Bulgarian citizen, who have been sentenced to death there. The demarche was sent in the last days of May. It strongly demanded fair procedures at the appeal court, transparent and due process, acceptance of the hitherto-neglected evidence and opinions of leading European and international experts on the HIV contamination of hundreds of Libyan children. Critics of the case say that the HIV infection had already existed for years before the Bulgarian nurses began work in the Benghazi hospital. The Bulgarian medics were accused of conspiring against the security of the Libyan state in collaboration with US and Israeli secret services. In fact the trial against them is an attempt to cover up the negligence and incompetence of an authoritarian and totalitarian rule that has failed to protect its citizens' health. Bulgaria is coordinating all its efforts with the EU to help its accused citizens. The US and Russia have also pledged their support for the Bulgarians at highest official levels.

2. NATO: NATO-Bulgaria. NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer made an official visit to Sofia from 13-14 May. He met with Bulgarian President Georgi Parvanov, Prime Minister Simeon Coburgotski, Foreign Minister Solomon Passy, and Defense Minister Nikolai Svinarov. He also attended the 7th Annual Atlantic Dinner, organized by the Atlantic Club of Bulgaria. Scheffer appealed to all member countries, including Bulgaria, to increase their national contributions to NATO missions. He also encouraged continuation of the current defense reform. The Secretary-General said Bulgaria was a strong ally and partner.

VII. The Influence of Other External Factors on the Region: National Great Powers and Institutions

US: US-Bulgaria. Bulgarian Foreign Minister Solomon Passy made an official visit to the US from 3-9 May. He signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Secretary of State of Texas, Jeffrey Connor between Bulgaria and Texas on 4 May. The memorandum would stimulate contacts in trade, investments, tourism, science, and sports. From 5-6 May, Passy met with US Secretary of State Colin Powell, with high-level representatives of the Department of State and from the National Security Council. The two leading

diplomats discussed bilateral issues, Iraq, Baghdad's debt owed to Bulgaria, and the fate of the Bulgarian medics in Libya. The Bulgarian foreign minister visited New York and participated in a closed UN Security Council session on the OSCE, whose CIO he currently is. He also met with UN Secretary General Kofi Annan.

VIII. Conclusions

During the period under consideration, Southeastern Europe continued to deal with its own issues in the Western Balkans, including the administration of Kosovo, meting out justice for the atrocities perpetrated during the post-Yugoslav wars, etc. The integration of the Balkans into EU and NATO was, as ever, a natural expression of the generally improving regional security, economic, social, and political situation. This month, Slovenia became the second Balkan country after Greece to join the EU. A huge amount of political energy and other efforts was devoted by the Southeastern European countries to issues related to the more or less proximate neighborhood to the east, mainly Afghanistan and Iraq. This is the neighborhood of the EU and NATO too. It is also a zone of high US interest. The stress of Iraq is for the time being balanced domestically in Romania and Bulgaria. The coming Summer Olympic Games in Greece concentrate powerful counter-terrorist effort by the countries from the region and the world.

EDITORIAL STAFF:

Dr. Plamen Pantev, *Editor-in-Chief*
 Dr. Tatiana Houbenova-Delissivkova
 Mr. Valeri Ratchev, M. A.
 Mr. Ivan Tsvetkov, M. A.
 Dr. Todor Tagarev

CONTACT AND REFERENCES:

ISSN 1311 – 3240
 Address: 1618 Sofia
 P. O. Box 231, Bulgaria
 Phone/Fax: ++(359-2-) 855 1828
 E-Mail Address: isis@mgu.bg
