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

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## **I. Introduction**

The system of international relations, dominated by the leading powerful democratic states and their allies and friends, received a new fresh start after the G-8, NATO, EU and EU-US summits in June. The 'international' character of the regulative sub-system of the international system has been restored: the 'multilateral' approach to international politics has triumphed, though the context of this approach was predominantly shaped by US interpretations of ongoing world events. For example, the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI) for the Broader Middle East includes the following areas where NATO is to interact with countries from the region:

- Counter-terrorism;
- Counter-proliferation to stop the spread of WMD ["Weapons of Mass Destruction"];
- Cooperation on border security to help prevent illicit trafficking of drugs, weapons, and people;
- Disaster preparedness and civil emergency planning;
- Training and education;
- Participation in NATO exercises;
- Tailored advice on defense reform and civil-military relations; and
- Promoting military interoperability.

The Istanbul Cooperation Initiative complements the G-8 and US-EU strategy of supporting calls for reform from within the Broader Middle East region. The global agenda agreed at the summit includes the struggle against terrorism, non-proliferation of WMD, democratic reform of the Greater Middle East, support for Afghanistan, and the gradual transformation of Iraq into a vanguard of democracy in the region. If any of these goals could be achieved, it would have a longer-term impact on the region as well as in Southeastern Europe.

There were indications in June that the EU and individual EU countries were scrutinizing the fight against terrorism more carefully. Security precautions for the upcoming Olympic Games continued. Intensive international cooperation added to Turkey's strict counter-terrorism measures at the NATO summit on 28-29 June in Istanbul.

Post-conflict rehabilitation of Iraq was boosted by UNSC Resolution 1546, legitimizing the new Iraqi government, and by the transfer of sovereign powers to the interim Iraqi government on 28 June, two days ahead of schedule. This was not only a good political step, but a pragmatic measure since all acts of political violence that may have been planned by the Iraqi resistance were probably intended to take place on 30 June. The post-conflict rehabilitation of Afghanistan was threatened in June by violence perpetrated by former Taliban and suspected al-Qaida extremists, which jeopardized voter registration for the elections planned for September. At the Istanbul summit, NATO became engaged more closely with the post-conflict support of both Iraq and Afghanistan. All these developments would have direct consequences for the participation of Southeastern European countries in the rehabilitation efforts in both states.

In the region of Southeastern Europe itself, the new Danish UNMIK chief Søren Jessen Petersen was appointed, replacing Harri Holkeri. KFOR pledged to maintain a lasting presence in the province to guard stability. The pro-EU presidential candidate, Boris Tadic, beat radical nationalist Tomislav Nikolic in national elections. This marked a major psychological step forward by the Serb people, who now have to reconcile their stereotypes about NATO with preparations to join NATO's PfP Program.

This month, the IMF, WB and the USTDA contributed to the further economic modernization of Southeastern Europe, including the specific requirements for membership that some of the Balkan countries must meet.

Three West Balkan countries demonstrated a unique historic cooperation by approaching NATO with a joint strategy. This month, the EU completed its accession negotiations with Bulgaria, opening the prospect of integrating Sofia on 1 January 2007. In June, the US boosted its project of technically covering the Black Sea with radar surveillance systems in Bulgaria and Romania, adding to the existing potential of NATO on the Turkish coast.

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

### **1. Terrorism and Post-Conflict Rehabilitation of Iraq and Afghanistan**

#### **a. Terrorism.**

**1) General Issues.** (1) John Kerry, the Democratic Party's presidential candidate at the November 2004 elections, said on 1 June in Palm Beach, Florida that nuclear terrorism was the gravest threat to the US. Kerry reminded listeners that al-Qaida mastermind Osama bin Laden has called getting hold of nuclear weapons a "sacred obligation". Kerry promised that if elected as president, he would appoint a top-level White House official to coordinate activities of preventing a terrorist attack with nuclear weapons. Kerry also said the issue of nuclear non-proliferation should assume a higher priority in the US-Russia bilateral agenda. (2) The EU intensified counter-terrorist measures by establishing a special unit for fighting financing of terrorism. This was decided on 17 June in Brussels at the EU summit. The new counter-terrorist service will become operational in September this year, Gijs de Vries, the EU chief counter-terrorism coordinator, confirmed. (3) On 18 June, the German parliament passed a law that allows the military to shoot down hijacked airliners in German airspace if they are assessed as a threat. The defense minister - or if he is absent, the foreign minister - can order the shooting down of a plane as last resort.

**2) Greece.** (1) NATO will provide a battalion of counter-NBC specialists to detect eventual biological attacks during the Olympic Games, the Greek press said on 22 June. The battalion will be mostly staffed by Czech experts. The Czech Republic and Switzerland have trained Greek experts in dealing with biological attacks. Switzerland will send to Greece the necessary equipment to deal with such potential threats. (2) Greece signed the Container Security Initiative (CSI) with the US on 24 June in Brussels, becoming the 18<sup>th</sup> signatory to the Initiative. CSI allows US customs officials to be deployed to the port of Piraeus to help screen US-bound cargo shipments that could pose a terrorist threat.

**3) Turkey.** (1) On 18 June, Turkish counter-terrorism police announced the arrest of four suspected members of the militant Ansar al-Islam group who allegedly planned and trained for suicide car attacks in Turkey. The police said it had confiscated a cache of bomb-making material. The militants have also trained in using remote-controlled bombs. Analysts think the group had been preparing for major bomb attacks during the NATO summit in Istanbul in the end of June. Ansar al-Islam was based in Northern Iraq and is alleged to have had links with al-Qaida. (2) The NATO summit meeting took place from

28-29 June in Istanbul. Three explosions in Istanbul and Ankara ahead of the summit heightened the tensions. Intelligence services of many countries, including from the US, Israel, Bulgaria, and others provided evidence of preparations for terrorist acts before and during the summit. Turkey closed its airspace over Istanbul for 48 hours. Turkish Air Force F-16s patrolled the airspace, backed up by NATO AWACS planes. Navy ships provided security from the sea. The Bosphorus was closed for ships transporting combustible or other hazardous materials. 30'000 policemen ensured that the situation during the summit was perceived as normal. Experts on counter-terrorism and civilian agents contributed to their efforts. Turkey spent US\$37 million to provide the security of the meeting.

**4) US-Bulgaria.** (1) The chief secretary of the Bulgarian Ministry of the Interior, General Boyko Borisov, visited Washington from 15-16 June and met with the interim director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), John McLaughlin. They discussed bilateral cooperation, including in the struggle against terrorism. (2) The US Secret Service will enlarge its presence in Bulgaria by increasing its personnel and resources in the next few months. This was announced by the Bulgarian authorities on 16 June. The US Secret Service and Bulgaria will cooperate closely in investigating money forgery. (3) On 18 June, the US Federal Bureau of Investigation officially opened its office in Sofia, Bulgaria. The FBI has more than 40 offices worldwide. So far, the Bureau's activity in Bulgaria has been coordinated from an office in Athens. One of the FBI's priorities is preventing terrorist acts. According to US sources, the FBI will coordinate its functions with the Bulgarian authorities and will not carry out independent operations in Bulgaria. The stationing of FBI in Sofia is expected to improve the fight against crime throughout the region, especially in the Western Balkans. Preventing smuggling and human trafficking is also a major focus of the FBI's activity, often connected with counter-terrorism.

**b. Post-Conflict Rehabilitation of Iraq.** (1) The weeks before the transfer of sovereignty were characterized by an intensified terrorist activity, aiming at total social destabilization and compromising the efforts of the interim Iraqi administration and the international occupation forces. Every day, dozens of Iraqis are killed – including policemen, soldiers, and civilians. Occupation forces have been also killed. The

following months will be crucial if Iraq is to succeed in stabilizing the situation and provide conditions for peaceful reconstruction and rehabilitation. (2) On 8 June, the UN Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 1546 approving the transfer of sovereign powers to an Iraqi government. The resolution marked a major diplomatic compromise between the US and Great Britain, on one side, and France, Russia, and Germany on the other. Most importantly, this resolution endorsed the creation of an interim government on 28 June and gave the latter much-needed international legitimacy. The Iraqi government needs international help to be able to prepare the country for free and representative elections by the end of January 2005. (3) At the G-8 summit in Sea Island, Georgia on 9 June, US President Bush and British Prime Minister Blair urged NATO to take larger role in Iraq. On 23 June, interim Iraqi Prime Minister Iyad Allawi officially requested NATO to take responsibility in preparing the security forces of his country. Participants at the NATO summit in Istanbul on 28 June agreed to engage in educating and training Iraqi defense and security forces and police, but not to send troops. NATO would be overstretched with a mission in Iraq while being fully engaged in Afghanistan. Training the security forces of Iraq is crucial for the stability of the country. (4) On 18 June, the EU agreed to open political contacts with the new interim government as soon as possible, but not to provide military support for the multinational forces that would replace the occupation coalition troops. Iraqi Prime Minister Iyad Allawi was invited to address the European Council in November. The EU will help UN teams to prepare for the elections, planned for January 2005. (5) On 24 June, the third Bulgarian battalion of 466 troops was officially sent to Iraq. The US government donated 10 armored jeeps and one fully equipped ambulance to the new Bulgarian contingent. The main task of the unit is to provide support to the new Iraqi government. In fiscal year 2005, there will be a separate fund for the missions abroad. This was a consensus agreement that the members of the parliamentary commission on defense and foreign policy reached this month.

**c. Post-Conflict Rehabilitation of Afghanistan.** (1) According to US, Russian, and Western European intelligence sources, al-Qaida is planning the total destabilization of the Greater Middle East after the transfer of power to an Iraqi sovereign government and ahead of the September elections in Afghanistan. On 1 June, an Afghan police chief was

killed and two other officials were wounded in Jalalabad. On 25 June two UN staff workers were killed by the Taliban in Afghanistan in an effort to disrupt the registration process for the upcoming parliamentary and presidential elections in this country in September. On 27 June, 10 Afghans who had registered to vote were murdered by Afghan terrorists. Elections in Afghanistan mean more than voting – they could enable the population to engage safely in a political campaign and join political parties. Until 22 June, 4.1 million voters had registered for the two elections in September. A critical mass of 6 million registered voters is needed to guarantee legitimate elections. Nearly 100'000 people visit the UN registration centers daily. (2) The Istanbul summit of NATO from 28-29 June formally decided that NATO would take full responsibility of the stability of Afghanistan. Providing security to this country will be an existential test for NATO. This means that the election process, the stability of the capital and the provinces, and building and reconstruction of roads in Afghanistan will become major challenges for NATO. Security in Afghanistan would also include stopping the flow of drugs at the Afghan borders. Providing overwhelming military power that would neutralize al-Qaida and Taliban plans for the destabilization of Afghanistan is a priority task for NATO. NATO Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer has been bringing the issue to the attention of individual NATO members for the past two months, asking for additional contributions. (3) On 14 June, the Bulgarian Ministry of Defense and General Staff of the armed forces announced that NATO has asked Sofia to provide a company of 200 infantry with commando units, medics, anti-NBC warfare experts, and a group that would provide security to the Kabul airport. The force is indispensable ahead of the elections in Afghanistan. (4) At the end of May, Turkey announced that it would send three helicopters and 56 crewmen to Afghanistan to contribute to ISAF. The decision was in response to a request by NATO.<sup>1</sup>

## **2. Post-Conflict Developments in the Balkans**

**a. Macedonia.** A three-day OSCE workshop on combating human trafficking in Macedonia was convened from 17-19 June in Ohrid. Increased collaboration between key law enforcement officials could lead to effective results in combating human trafficking

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<sup>1</sup> See ISN Security Watch, 2 June 2004, "NATO assumes command of Afghan airport", <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/infoservice/secwatch/index.cfm?service=cwn&parent=detail&sNewsID=8934&menu=3>

in this country. Investigation and prosecution of human trafficking cases remain sporadic in Macedonia. The OSCE workshop was conducted in partnership with the US Department of Justice International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program and the Overseas Prosecutorial Development Assistance and Training Program.

**b. Kosovo.** On 16 June, Danish diplomat Søren Jessen Petersen was appointed as the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General in Kosovo. Jessen Petersen has served as the EU Special Representative in Skopje. The appointment is a clear sign of the international community's commitment to a better future for everyone in the province, NATO Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer said. NATO will continue to fully support UNMIK and its new chief in building self-sustaining peace and stability in Kosovo and throughout the region. EU High Representative on Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana urged Kosovo leaders and all communities in Kosovo to extend their full cooperation to the new UNMIK chief. Jessen Petersen will take the job later this summer.

**c. Bosnia and Herzegovina.** The World Bank (WB) approved the transfer of US\$97 million to Bosnia and Herzegovina on 16 June to implement social and economic reforms that are required as part of the accession process to the EU. The funds were allocated to three projects dealing with budgetary, social protection, and employment services issues. On 30 June, Bosnia and Herzegovina lost its "exceptional post-conflict country status" with the WB. It is already classified as a "regular transition country". The change in status is a proof of the great progress achieved in Bosnia and Herzegovina since 1996. The change also requires that the pace of implementation of key reforms be accelerated.

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

**1. Bulgaria.** According to sources speaking on 31 May at the Bulgarian Ministry of Justice, there has been a dramatic increase in applications for Bulgarian citizenship in the last four years. Most of the candidates are Moldovan citizens, followed by Macedonians. The total number of applicants from the beginning of this year till 21 May was 10'734, almost reaching the total number of applicants in 2003. This year, less than 2'000 applicants were successful. Ethnic roots and better life opportunities are among the reasons for the applications for citizenship.

**2. Romania.** The results of the local elections in Romania of 7 June show that the opposition Democratic and National Liberal Parties have improved their positions. The mayoral election in Bucharest led to the defeat of the ruling party candidate, Foreign Minister Mirca Geoana, with 29.6 per cent, who lost to the incumbent and leader of the opposition Democratic Party, Traian Basescu, who won 59.3 per cent. The local elections are a significant test for the upcoming parliamentary elections in November this year.

**3. Serbia and Montenegro.** The first round of the fourth effort to elect a president of Serbia was held on 13 June. The leading contenders were the nationalist Tomislav Nikolic of the Serbian Radical Party and Boris Tadic of the opposition Democratic Party. The second round of the elections took place on 27 June, and this time the representative of the democratic pro-EU parties, Boris Tadic, won the elections with 53.7 per cent of the vote. Tadic's victory was received positively by EU and EC officials.

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

**1. Bulgaria-Serbia-Montenegro.** On 31 May, Foreign Minister Vuk Draskovic of Serbia and Montenegro made an official visit to Bulgaria. He met with his Bulgarian counterpart Solomon Passy, Prime Minister Simeon Coburgotski, the Speaker of the National Parliament Ognyan Gerdzhikov, and President Georgi Parvanov. While the political relations between the two countries are very good, the economic ties lag behind. The foreign ministers outlined the following goals: construction of a Sofia-Nis highway, modernization of the Sofia-Belgrade railway, and the construction of gas pipeline system between the two capitals. Airline services between the two countries were also discussed. The strategic goal of the two states' policies, the foreign ministers said, was to make the borders of the two countries just symbolic.

**2. Romania-Bulgaria.** On 20 June, the prime ministers of Romania and Bulgaria, Adrian Nastase and Simeon Coburgotski, marked together the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the construction of the only bridge between the two countries over the Danube. They discussed the construction of the second bridge at Vidin-Kalafat that is to begin later this year or at the beginning of 2005.

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

**1. Russia-Bulgaria.** The Russian natural gas giant 'Gazprom' plans the construction of a new gas pipeline to Italy via Bulgaria, Macedonia, and Albania. The director-general of Gazprom's foreign trade company Gasexport, Alexander Medvedev, made this declaration on 11 June at the Seventh Annual Conference of the European Business Congress near Varna. The basic route to Italy is via Austria, and the pipeline through Bulgaria is a reserve option. By the end of the decade, the transportation of Russian gas through Bulgaria is expected to double in quantity. Gazprom has plans of increasing the supplies of gas to Greece, Turkey, and Macedonia through Bulgaria. This would require investments by Bulgarian companies to enlarge the capacity of the gas pipeline network in the country.

**2. Romania.** On 14 June, Romanian Finance Minister Mihai Tanasescu announced plans to cut the country's corporate tax from 25 per cent to 19 per cent in 2005. Romania would thus match similar reductions in Eastern Europe. The IMF gave its consent to the Romanian government's decision. Bulgaria plans to trim in 2005 its corporate tax from 19.5 to 15 per cent. Both countries expect to draw investment interest and collect more taxes.

**3. WB-Croatia.** On 1 June, the WB approved a loan of €40 million to Croatia. The loan aims to help control pollution and improve water quality along Croatia's Adriatic Sea coastline to meet EU environmental requirements. According to the WB, "the protection of Croatia's 1'780-kilometer Adriatic Sea coastline and 1'185 islands is a priority for both ecological and economic reasons. The project will address current deficiencies in wastewater treatment, discharge infrastructure and sewage expansion to curtail water pollution, which is comprising ecology, public health, tourism, fishing industries and aquaculture."<sup>2</sup> The coastal municipalities that have been identified as candidates to participate in the project include Krk, Opatija, Biograd, Zadar, and Rijeka.

**4. IMF-Serbia and Montenegro.** On 7 June, the IMF completed its third review of Serbia and Montenegro's economic performance under a 2002 arrangement that supports the country's economic program through 2005. The decision enabled Serbia and Montenegro to draw an additional US\$147 million from the IMF immediately. The

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<sup>2</sup> <http://japan.usembassy.gov/e/p/tp-20040603-15.html>

review acknowledged that Serbia and Montenegro had lowered of inflation, attracted foreign direct investment, and strengthened foreign reserves.

**5. WB-Bulgaria.** On 14 June, the WB approved the second in a series of loans to support reforms across different sectors of the Bulgarian economy. The loan was for US\$150 million and was designed to help Bulgaria achieve specific economic targets by 2005 while making substantial progress toward EU accession: annual growth rates of 4.5-5.0 per cent, half the poverty rates of 2001, and an unemployment rate in the 12-14 per cent range. Increased competitiveness and productivity is the key to realizing higher growth, particularly in the EU accession context. Increased growth and investment, according to the WB, will shorten the period of convergence with the EU. Currently Bulgaria's per capita income is only 28 per cent of the average EU income.

**6. USTDA-Bulgaria.** On 21 June, the US Trade and Development Agency (USTDA) "awarded a \$384,531 grant to the Municipality of Karlovo in Bulgaria to [co-fund a feasibility study on a municipal pilot wind farm project](#). The project seeks to demonstrate that wind power is an economically viable source of energy that can be replicated elsewhere in Bulgaria."<sup>3</sup>

**7. WB-Turkey.** On 21 June, the WB approved US\$1 billion loan for Turkey "to support the government's financial and public sector reform priorities throughout 2004 while ensuring that social programmes are adequately funded and better targeted. Key priorities include banking regulations and restructuring state banks in preparation for privatisation, and improving the corporate insolvency regime. The loan represents 'a major step forward for Turkey on its reform path,' as well as 'confidence in Turkey, the Government's reform program and the prospects for growth and stability,' said World Bank official Andrew Vorkink."<sup>4</sup>

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

### **1. NATO**

**1) NATO-Western Balkans.** The NATO summit in Istanbul from 28-29 June decided to step up activity to prepare the Adriatic Charter countries – Albania, Croatia, and

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.useu.be/Categories/US&EUEnlargement/>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.washingtonfile.net/Article.asp?ID=6E856DD2-20C7-40A5-BC44-4CEEEDD24C75>

Macedonia - for membership. Bulgaria announced a special interest in increasing cooperation with the three candidates to help them cover the requirements for membership. The prime ministers of Serbia and Montenegro and of Bosnia and Herzegovina – contenders for PfP membership - were invited to Istanbul by Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan. Once Belgrade and Sarajevo handed over their war criminals to the ICTY in The Hague, they would be admitted to NATO's PfP Program. NATO decided to terminate SFOR in Bosnia and Herzegovina at the end of 2004, when the EU will mount a combined military/police mission. However, the commitment of NATO and the US to the security and stability of Bosnia and Herzegovina will continue. NATO will establish a small headquarters focused on defense reform, apprehending indicted war criminals, and fighting terrorism. The NATO force in Kosovo (KFOR) will be maintained at its current strength.

**2) NATO-Bulgaria.** On 28 May, NATO Assistant Secretary-General on Investments Marshall S. Billingsley visited the annual "Hemus" arms exhibition in Plovdiv. He announced that Bulgarian companies would produce electronic jamming systems, radars, and rocket-propelled grenades that could also be useful in pursuing what the US government calls the "War on Terrorism". Production would also include explosives-detection systems.

**3) NATO-Adriatic Charter Countries.** On 17 June, the foreign ministers of Albania, Croatia, and Macedonia made a joint address to the North Atlantic Council in Brussels. They declared their joint strategy to support each other's candidacy for membership in NATO. They also said they would work together to develop joint capabilities to contribute to NATO missions. It is the first time that candidates for NATO membership have formally agreed to work together to reach that goal.

## **2. EU: EU – Bulgaria, Romania**

On 15 June, Bulgaria closed its last negotiations chapters on "Competition" and "Others" with the EU . This happened during the EU Intergovernmental Conference in Luxembourg. Bulgaria closed the chapters "Agriculture", "Regional Politics", and "Financial and Budgetary Questions" on 4 June. On 15 June, the EU agreed to increase its contributions to the preparation of Bulgaria for membership by €240 million. Half of this sum will be spent for strengthening the EU's external borders by 2007-2009. The

other part will be spent to help the payments of the state budget on agriculture. A special clause of the agreement allows slowing the EU accessions of Bulgaria and Romania by up to one year if monitoring shows they do not fulfill their obligations. Bulgaria accepted this hard condition, allowing postponement of the membership, because it still has to solve issues related to “Competition” in the next months, and as a way of differentiating its individual approach to EU membership from that of Romania. Bulgaria still has to solve issues as corruption and organized crime, and must improve its administrative and judicial system capacities. Sofia must be ready for membership by 2007 and must have achieved economic growth by then. Conditions for membership will be monitored in a long and intensive process, and Bulgaria is still far from the end of the negotiations. Though Romania still has to negotiate six chapters by the end of this year, it is expected that both countries will sign the EU accession treaty together in 2005, and that both will join EU on 1 January 2007. The success of Bulgaria was made possible due to the successful implementation of the political criteria for membership in the EU. Romanian opposition parties used the opportunity of Bulgaria’s success to criticize the present government for its ‘failure’ to carry out the structure reforms and fight corruption. Bulgaria is ready to provide its technical expertise to help Romania complete its negotiations on time, Bulgarian Minister for European Affairs Meglena Kuneva said on 15 June.

The EU has decided to start preparations on signing the accession treaty with Bulgaria on 1 July 2004. Experts in Brussels say that while Sofia will have no problems becoming an EU member on 1 January 2007, Romania will not be ready until 2009. Even signing the accession treaty together would not necessarily mean joining the EU together, because the monitoring and the ‘preventive clause’ would allow the EU to postpone the full membership of Bucharest if it does not fulfill requirements. Bulgaria must implement 734 different concrete obligations to the EU by the end of this year.

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

**1. China-Bulgaria.** In the last days of May, a top-level Chinese parliamentary delegation visited Bulgaria. Speaker of the Chinese Parliament U Bangou met with Speaker of the

Bulgarian Parliament Ognyan Gerdzhikov and with other MPs. The two parliamentary leaders agreed to strengthen bilateral cooperation.

**2. US-Romania, Bulgaria.** On 25 June, Bulgarian authorities disclosed some details of the US project “Lagoon”. Its implementation would allow several stations on the Romanian Black Sea coast and eight on the Bulgarian side to control the ship traffic of the whole sea from 2005. The US will provide US\$300 million for the purchase of radars from Lockheed-Martin. The Bulgarian Ministry of Defense has concluded a framework agreement with the US company. The surveillance systems around the Black Sea stationed in Bulgaria and Romania would add to the already functioning radars on the Turkish Black Sea coast. US and NATO control over the Black Sea’s maritime traffic would be technically fully guaranteed.

### **VIII. Conclusions**

June 2004 saw Southeastern European states still involved in Afghanistan and Iraq. Southeastern Europe is the strategic base of any approach to the Greater Middle East area, as outlined by the US, G-8, NATO, and the EU. Completing the job of stabilization and progress of the Balkans already has a new meaning. The further advance of democracy in Serbia, the successful end of Bulgaria’s accession negotiations with the EU, the ‘open doors’ for membership in NATO for Albania, Croatia and Macedonia and the Balkan countries’ closer involvement in Afghanistan and Iraq are other features of the reported period. The new strategic focus on the eastern Mediterranean and the Greater Middle East in general requires this new, proactive, and supportive geopolitical and geo-strategic role for the Balkans,

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#### **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

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#### **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](mailto:isis@mgu.bg)

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