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LETTER DATED 15 MAY 1998 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
OF THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA TO THE UNITED
NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

I have the honour to transmit herewith a letter dated 15 May 1998, addressed to you by His Excellency Mr. Blagoj Handziski, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Macedonia, concerning the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force (UNPREDEP). I should be grateful if you would bring the contents of the letter to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

I should be grateful if you would have the text of the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Naste CALOVSKI
Ambassador

Annex

Letter dated 15 May 1998 from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of
the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to the United Nations
addressed to the Secretary-General

Allow me to express my high esteem to you and to avail myself of this opportunity to state our arguments for the need to extend the stay of the mission of the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force (UNPREDEP) in the Republic of Macedonia after 31 August of this year.

As is well known, on the basis of our letter of 3 November 1997 in which, based upon an extensive argumentation, we requested an extension of the stay of the UNPREDEP mission in the Republic of Macedonia, and your report of 20 November 1997 (S/1997/911), the Security Council adopted resolution 1142 (1997) of 4 December 1997.

By that resolution, the Security Council:

1. Decided to extend the mandate of UNPREDEP until 31 August 1998, to be followed by withdrawal of the military component immediately thereafter;

2. Requested the Secretary-General to report to the Security Council by 1 June 1998 on the modalities of the termination of UNPREDEP, including practical steps for full withdrawal of the military component after 31 August 1998, and to make recommendations for the type of international presence thereafter, most appropriate for the Republic of Macedonia.

The Security Council had obviously taken into account your observations about the positive developments in the area, especially the stabilization of the situation in Albania and your belief that peace and stability in the Republic of Macedonia continue to depend largely on developments in other parts of the region. In paragraph 24 of your report you enumerated the majority of the arguments contained in our letter which, among other things, pointed to the possibilities for negative developments in some parts of the region, particularly in Kosovo, as external factors of instability, about which you concluded that, although "none of those factors represents an immediate threat to peace and stability in the host country, they highlight the level of unpredictability of, and the dangers inherent in, developments outside the control of the host country's authorities".

Regretfully, both your concerns about the unpredictability of the developments and the dangers they contain and our apprehension that the situation in some parts of the region, especially to the north of us, will further deteriorate were justified.

In spite of our efforts to sustain the course of open cooperation with all the neighbouring countries - efforts that have thus far resulted in a significant improvement in the relations of the Republic of Macedonia with the Hellenic Republic and, in particular, with the Republic of Albania - what still remains open is the issue of the demarcation of the inter-State border with the

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Federal Republic of Yugoslavia which, in view of the current developments in Kosovo, which abuts part of that border, has acquired quite different and dangerous dimensions.

Also, in spite of the overall engagement of the international community, especially the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the European Union (EU) and the Contact Group, and their recommendations for the commencement of a dialogue without preconditions for a political settlement of the crisis in Kosovo, and in spite of the full support and constructive approach with regard to this issue on the part of the countries of the region, including the Republic of Macedonia, the situation in Kosovo is still further deteriorating in the direction of direct military conflicts that could spread throughout the region and cause its destabilization and dreadful consequences for the peace and stability in the whole of Europe.

The Republic of Macedonia has, over past years, invested enormous efforts in protecting its border with the Republic of Albania and particularly the part of its border with the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia that faces Kosovo, and has so far achieved maximum results in safeguarding it and in preventing illegal border crossings and eventual arms smuggling from the Republic of Albania. In this connection, I would like to underline the enormous contribution made by the OSCE mission, the Monitoring Mission of the European Commission, and especially of the UNPREDEP mission in the Republic of Macedonia, and also to point to all their reports confirming the security at those borders.

I would in particular like to inform you that the Government of the Republic of Macedonia has undertaken comprehensive measures for the full implementation of Security Council resolution 1160 (1998) of 31 March 1998 imposing an embargo on all kinds of weapons against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

I would like once again to express gratitude to the United Nations and the Security Council, as well as to all the contributing countries for the deployment of this mission, which has undoubtedly been one of the most successful United Nations missions ever, and has played an outstanding role in the stabilization of the situation along our northern and western borders and all along acted as a deterrent and as a stabilizing factor for the whole region. Of decisive importance for this kind of efficiency has been the clear-cut mandate, the professionalism of all the participants from all the countries, the structure of the military component of the mission as well as the outstanding cooperation between its civilian and military leaders and the institutions of the Republic of Macedonia, especially the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Interior. These were the basic reasons why UNPREDEP was hailed by all the citizens of the Republic of Macedonia and its members accepted as genuine missionaries of peace.

Under conditions of:

- Negative developments to the north of our border, especially in Kosovo, and danger of direct military conflicts;

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- An as yet undemarcated border between the Republic of Macedonia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia;
- Tensions along the Albanian-Yugoslav border, which could over a longer period be a source of instability;

the peace and stability of the neighbouring countries, including the Republic of Macedonia, could be endangered and therefore we believe that if UNPREDEP should be terminated on 31 August, and especially if its military component is to be withdrawn, a security gap will inevitably arise, not only along our northern and western borders, but also in the wider region.

We expect that the United Nations, as well as the States members of the Security Council, will take into account the aforementioned factors of instability, especially to the north of our borders, and will adopt a resolution by which the stay of UNPREDEP in the Republic of Macedonia will be extended, under the same mandate, structure and proportions between the Nordic and the American battalions, for the six months following 31 August 1998.

In accordance with Security Council resolution 1110 (1997) of 28 May 1997, the original military component of 1,050 was reduced by 300 troops. The current military component is 750 troops.

We believe that in case of further deterioration of the situation in Kosovo the military experts of UNPREDEP, in cooperation with, and upon the agreement of, the authorities of the Republic of Macedonia, should seriously consider the possibility of strengthening the military component, while maintaining the current structure and proportions between the Nordic and the American battalions.

(Signed) Blagoj HANDZISKI
