
BULGARIAN PM PRAISES MACEDONIA, SLAMS GREECE OVER MIGRANT CRISIS

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Bulgarian Prime Minister Boyko Borissov said today (25 March) the main threat of a migrant wave for his country came from EU-member Greece, not from Macedonia – an EU-candidate country who he said was behaving responsively and effectively in dealing with the challenge.

Bulgaria fears that the closure of the Balkan route at the Greece-Macedonia border would create an alternative route across its territory.

Borissov made his comments in the Bulgarian parliament, answering questions from MPs. He said that Turkey was motivated not to allow refugees crossing into the EU, adding that the real problem will come from Greece.

My finding is that in a poor Macedonia refugee camps are covered with gravel, with concrete, they have playgrounds, everything is in very good condition, while in Greece, which take millions of euros [from EU], there is nothing and the conditions are really appalling, Borissov said.

He also said that Bulgaria was ready to build a light fence along its border with Greece, if necessary. The announcement was first made by Defence Minister Nikolay Nenkov.

Bulgaria has built a fence along its border with Turkey, but had not previously contemplated to build a barrier along the border with Greece, a Schengen member. Bulgaria has fulfilled all conditions to join Schengen for several years now, but has been prevented by certain EU-member states, in particular the Netherlands.

According to reports, the Dutch fear that if Romania and Bulgaria join Schengen, the harbour of Constanta in Romania and the Bulgarian ports of Varna and Bourgas would become competitors to Rotterdam.

Borissov said that the military exercise Frontier 2016 would allow the army and the Interior Ministry to unite their efforts for border security. He explained that this exercise would not be the only one and even now exercises take place in the region of Gotse Delchev (close to the Greek border) and elsewhere.

Migrants at the Idomeni makeshift camp on the Greek side of the border with Macedonia are protesting against the closing of borders on the Balkan route.

The Greek press highlighted the seriousness of the situation following the withdrawal of many

NGOs from Idomeni, where there is no longer anyone to look after the health of the migrants.

By Georgi Gotev | EurActiv.com

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