
U.S. RAPS ALLY ALBANIA FOR 'CARELESS' WORDS ON KOSOVO

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The United States urged Albania on Wednesday to avoid "careless language" after its prime minister suggested a single president and single security policy for both his country and neighboring Kosovo in a speech that infuriated Serbia.

Serbia is sensitive to any talk of unification of its former province of Kosovo, which has a majority ethnic Albanian population, and Albania.

Addressing Kosovo's parliament on Sunday on the 10th anniversary of the country's independence from Belgrade, Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama said: "Kosovo and Albania will have a single foreign policy and not just the same embassies and diplomatic representations, but why not one president, a symbol of national unity, and one national security policy."

Rama later complained that his comments had been taken out of context, but the European Union said they were "not helpful" and Serbia accused the Albanian premier of seeking to build a "Greater Albania" in the region.

The U.S. embassy in Tirana expressed disappointment with Rama's comments.

"Careless language alluding to unification is unhelpful and damaging to Albania's relationships with its neighbours. We call on all leaders to be good neighbours and abandon the divisive language of the past," it said in a statement.

The United States spearheaded NATO's bombing of Serbia in 1999 that eventually led to Kosovo's declaration of independence, but is anxious not to undermine the stability of the Balkan region.

Albania, Kosovo and Serbia all aspire to join the EU one day, but Washington still wields more influence in Tirana and Pristina than does Brussels. Albania is also a member of the U.S.-led NATO alliance.

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