
GREEK DEFENSE MINISTER ACCUSES FYROM OFFICIALS OF UNDERMINING RELATIONS

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Defense Minister Panos Kammenos on Thursday accused officials from the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) of undermining progress between the two Balkan neighbors, who signed a deal in June to settle a decades-old name dispute.

With their provocative comments against Greece, Skopje officials including the prime minister himself and the foreign minister, are torpedoing any effort to find a solution, Kammenos, who also heads Greeces nationalist junior coalition partner Independent Greeks (ANEL), said on the sidelines of an informal meeting of European defense ministers in Vienna. The Greek people will have the final say, he said.

Kammenoss comments came in response to an address by FYROM Foreign Minister Nikola Dimitrov in the European Parliament in Brussels on Wednesday where he said that his countrys citizens are Macedonian and speak the Macedonian language.

The reference to a Macedonian nation is in violation of any agreement, Kammenos said on Thursday.

The Greek government wants to distinguish between the concept of Macedonian citizenship for the people of Northern Macedonia and the ethnic undertones that the government in Skopje wants to highlight.

For his part, FYROM Prime Minister Zoran Zaev urged citizens of his country on Thursday to go out and vote for a European Macedonia in the upcoming referendum on September 30 on the name deal with Greece, under which it will be called North Macedonia.

Greece has agreed to lift its objections to FYROMs accession to the European Union and NATO once the country ratifies the deal.

Even though a recent poll conducted in FYROM showed that more than half of respondents agree that the Balkan nation should join NATO and the European Union under the name Republic of North Macedonia, authorities in the neighboring country are concerned about voter turnout.

Zaev, who refrained from using the term North Macedonia, called the referendum a historic opportunity for Macedonia.

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