

Rice briefs Senate panel on Kosovo status

by UPI

WASHINGTON -- U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said she hoped Serbia accepts a resolution regarding Kosovo's independence from Serbia. Speaking before the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Rice said she would encourage Serbia to accept Kosovo's decision, the Voice of America reported. She said Serbia could be more fully integrated with Europe once the Kosovo matter is settled but she said the process won't be easy. "I do know that this is going to be an extraordinarily difficult period of time for the Serbian people," she told the panel. "And what the United States will be doing is offering a hand of friendship, saying that the status of Kosovo, and its resolution, will allow Serbia to look forward and to move on then with what it needs to do." The Bush administration has endorsed the plan of U.N. envoy Martti Ahtisaari, a former president of Finland, to supervise Kosovo's independence, which also enjoys bipartisan support in Congress. Rice said the European Union is sending a mission of police and justice personnel to Kosovo and NATO troops will provide security.

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