

Skopje rejects Greek bid on name issue

by UPI

SKOPJE, Macedonia -- Macedonia's foreign affairs minister rejected a Greek offer to solve an 18-year-old dispute over the name Macedonia, claimed by the two neighboring countries.

Foreign Minister Antonio Milososki said the Greek proposal that the former southern Yugoslav region rename itself as "Republic Northern Macedonia" is not acceptable to the Skopje government, the Macedonian news agency MIA reported Friday.

Macedonia is also the name of a northern Greek region and Greece says using the name "Macedonia" implies territorial claims. Currently the nation, whose capital is Skopje, is officially called the "Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia," abbreviated as FYRM, the name recognized by the United Nations.

Macedonia and Greece have been involved in diplomatic wrangling since 1991 when the Skopje government was internationally recognized following disintegration of the former Yugoslav federation. The two nations signed an accord in 1995 agreeing to recognize each other's sovereignty and their common border, but did not resolve the name issue, which is hindering Macedonia's efforts to join NATO and the European Union.

The name dispute is aimed against the national and linguistic identity of the Macedonian people, Milososki said.

Milososki said in 1945, when Macedonia was founded as a state in the Yugoslav Federation, Greece had no complaints about the name.

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