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U.S.-Greek tiff 'closed'

Foreign Minister Pangalos, Ambassador Burns explain comments

Foreign Minister Theodoros Pangalos met yesterday with U.S. Ambassador Nicholas Burns and both men sought to end the chill in relations which followed Pangalos's attack on President Bill Clinton last week for his failure to solve the Cyprus problem. Both sides worked to explain statements which had soured relations and reaffirmed their determination to work together to solve regional problems.

Last Wednesday, White House spokesman Mike McCurry angered Athens and Nicosia by referring to Turkey's invasion of Cyprus in 1974 as a "conflict." The Greek side charged that this was a departure from scores of UN Security Council resolutions condemning the invasion. The following day, Pangalos accused Clinton of telling a "shameless lie" in his campaign promise to solve the Cyprus situation. He also urged the United States to leave Greece and Turkey alone to solve their problems. U.S. officials responded that his comments were "unbecoming" and "outrageous."

After yesterday's 90-minute meeting, the two sides appeared to

be happy with the explanations provided.

"I had a very productive meeting with Mr Pangalos. He assured me that the Greek government wants to have a very strong and close relationship with the United States," Burns told Kathimerini. "He assured me that the Greek government has the highest personal regard for President Clinton. Mr Pangalos and I will work closely on Cyprus and Greek-Turkish relations," he said.

"The issue of the past week is closed," Burns added. This was in accordance with the Greek government spokesman's statement on Wednesday that the flap was a "parenthesis" in good relations between the two countries.

Burns stressed also that, "We have not deviated from UN resolutions. We believe in UN resolutions. We have not changed our position on Cyprus."

He said that the United States would not stop its efforts to help solve the Cyprus problem, and announced that, following his proposal, U.S. State Department special coordinator for Cyprus Thomas

Miller would visit Athens in September to discuss some proposals he made in Nicosia last week. Miller was supposed to visit Greece early this week but Pangalos had said that there was nothing for the two sides to discuss, canceling the meeting.

Following the Pangalos-Burns talks yesterday, comments from Greek sources were similar to those expressed by the ambassador. They said that explanations were provided by both sides, that they believe that good relations should exist between the two countries and that U.S. initiatives were welcome in the region as long as they are in accordance with international law.

The Greek side said that Pangalos's statements had never been aimed at President Clinton, whom both the premier and foreign minister hold in high regard, and that what had been noted was that Clinton's preelection statements on Cyprus were different to those made recently by American officials such as McCurry and Miller.

Burns also met yesterday with Defense Minister Akis Tsochadzopoulos. In a speech earlier to graduates of the air force academy, Tsochadzopoulos spoke of Washington's objections to providing guarantees for a no-fly zone over Cyprus (which would allow Nicosia to back down from deploying the Russian S-300 air defense system which it has ordered).

He said that "there are other possibilities of guarantees, such as from the Security Council, the United Nations, the OSCE, so that control could be assured." In Nicosia, government spokesman Christos Stylianides said that Cyprus was in favor of the United States continuing its mediation aimed at ending the Cyprus problem and that it should stick to the framework of UN resolutions and focus on issues of security and demilitarization.

Athens hails Court ruling

Greece yesterday hailed as "highly significant" the European Court of Human rights ruling that Turkey must pay \$640,000 in damages to Titina Loizidou, a Greek Cypriot woman refused access to her property in northern Cyprus since the Turkish invasion in 1974.

George Papandreou, minister for European affairs, said the decision was "exceptionally important" because it had dealt with the "Turkish occupation of the Republic of Cyprus." It also showed that the court could rule on acts of a member of the Council of Europe

with wider consequences than "laws and the interests of a simple plaintiff," he said.

Earlier in the day, Turkey had reacted awkwardly to the decision by the Strasbourg court, which followed its December 1996 ruling that Turkey had violated the Convention on Human Rights by denying Loizidou access to her property. The Turkish foreign ministry claimed that the order was inapplicable, saying that Ankara exercised "no public authority" in the breakaway state established by Turkish Cypriots in 1983. Only Turkey recognizes it.