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# Athens Backtracks, Diplomatically

## But It Doesn't Apologize for Calling Clinton a 'Liar' Over Cyprus

*The Associated Press*

ATHENS — Greece tried to mend fences with the United States on Tuesday but did not apologize for saying President Bill Clinton had lied about his Cyprus policies.

"A small inconvenience was created on both sides, and we think this inconvenience was a small parenthesis that has closed," said a government spokesman, Dimitris Reppas.

Mr. Reppas said that although "Greek-American relations are good, they must and can become much better."

A series of comments

made over the last week by Foreign Minister Theodoros Pangalos were condemned Monday by the U.S. State Department.

"They are so outrageous and so unbecoming of the foreign minister of a NATO ally that we would be surprised if anyone took them seriously," said James Rubin, the department's spokesman.

Mr. Pangalos last week twice blamed Mr. Clinton for renegeing on pre-election promises to make Cyprus a top U.S. foreign policy priority. In an unprecedented remark, Mr. Pangalos called

Mr. Clinton a "liar."

On Sunday, Mr. Pangalos said Greece and the region had suffered enough over the years because of involvement by the United States.

"Your help, your friendship — we have had enough of them," he said. "Leave the people of Turkey and Greece, of the region, at peace. Stop working for our good. We have seen this good. Thank you very much, we have had enough."

Mr. Reppas has defended Mr. Pangalos's remarks. But Mr. Reppas added that he discussed Mr. Pangalos' remarks with the U.S. ambassador, Nicholas Burns, late Monday.

"The temperature is already high and we have to bring it down," Mr. Reppas said.

Cyprus has been divided since the 1974 Turkish occupation of its northern third.