

US Points at New Address of Velvet Revolution, Belarus

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In October 2004, US President George W. Bush signed a decree to support non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and providing financial aid for media propaganda for a velvet Belarusian revolution.

Moscow – After much speculation over which former Soviet Republic is next for a Western-backed “velvet revolution”, the US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice clearly indicated Belarus. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, on the other hand, strongly criticized his US counterpart.

Describing Belarus as the “last true dictatorship” in Europe, Rice called for a regime change in the country. Rice claimed in Moscow on April 20 that the US did not back revolutions in Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan, but during a news conference in Lithuania same day she announced, “It’s time for a change in Belarus.”

The US has never spoken so clearly ahead of a velvet revolution in the other three countries. When asked whether or not the US backed the opposition in Belarus for a revolution, Rice replied: “If it brings about democratic progress, why is it a bad thing for people to throw off the yoke of tyranny and decide they want to control their own futures?”

Harshly criticizing Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko in a statement in the evening of April 20, Rice met with opposition leaders in Lithuania yesterday.

Encouraging the opposition leaders for a velvet revolution, Rice said: “We think the road to democracy in Belarus, while it may seem difficult and, at times, even far away, there will be a road to democracy in Belarus.”

She told the group that the US admires their courage and self-sacrifice. The US administration has close contacts with Pyat Plus, an organization formed by democratic opposition groups for a “velvet revolution” and various youth organizations in Belarus....

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Attending a North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) meeting in Vilnius, the Russian Foreign Minister reacted against Rice’s announcement regarding Belarus and emphasized that the US’s efforts for regime changes in other countries including Belarus was

“unacceptable”. Lavrov said it is wrong to democratic principles from outside.

The Belarusian Foreign Minister Sergei Martinov, meanwhile, said that his country’s future will not be “determined by Rice, but by the People.”

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MosNews (Russia) April 22, 2005

U.S. Will Spend \$5M to Establish Democracy in Belarus

The U.S. Senate has approved an extra \$81 billion war budget that includes \$5 million for programs aimed to support democracy in Belarus, RIA Novosti reports.

The programs will be under the control of the State Department Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor. The Bureau announced earlier this month that \$2 million would be spent on “consolidation of democratic parties” in Belarus.

Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko, in power since 1994, is widely regarded as a dictator. During her visit to Russia earlier this week the U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice called the former Soviet republic “the last dictatorship in the center of Europe”. She also added that Belarus should be the next country to establish democracy.

In October 2004 a referendum in Belarus approved a third term for Lukashenko. The presidential elections are due to be held in 2006. Many commentators say that Lukashenko’s attempt to run for a third term will spark next the “velvet revolution” in the CIS.

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