

World

Bulgaria OKs 3 bases for U.S. troops

By Nicholas Kralev
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"We don't plan on having that many permanent workers," the senior U.S. official said. "But Bulgarian companies are eligible for contracts for services if they meet our requirements and standards."

There will be 2,500 U.S. troops stationed on the three bases in southern Bulgaria at any given time, although their number could reach 5,000 during rotation periods, the official said.

The agreement, which has to be ratified by the Bulgarian parliament before entering into force, runs for 10 years and will be automatically renewed. Either side can terminate it with one year's notice.

Miss Rice signed a similar agreement with Romania in December. It has been ratified by the parliament's lower chamber and is currently awaiting approval by the Senate, said Sorin Ducaru, the Romanian ambassador to Washington.

Both Bulgaria and Romania are former Warsaw Pact countries whose strategic location at the crossroads of Europe and the Middle East attracted Washington's attention after the September 11 attacks, ensuring their admission to NATO.

Miss Rice will participate in a meeting of the NATO foreign ministers in Sofia and will also visit Greece and Turkey.