

## The Status of Kosova and the *LANAC* Operation

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The predictions<sup>1</sup> about a fourth November in the history of the Albanians,<sup>2</sup> similar to the November when Skanderbeg hoisted the flag over Kruja, or when Ismail Qemali did the same in Vlora, were proved wrong. Due to the elections in Serbia, the decision over the final status of Kosova will be postponed to after the elections. This decision has not only created confusion but also a sense of impatience among Albanians, an impatience that is further fueled by the security fears in the field. But "Kosova can no longer wait," the Financial Times said a few days ago in one of their editorials.<sup>3</sup> According to the paper, the postponement will not only keep Albanians from assuming responsibility for their future but, what is worst, it could also provoke them to violence.

The State Department has continued to insist on the need to move quickly with the determination of the status. On November 14, the joined the EU in calling for the determination of the Kosova status no later than January of next year. In practical terms, this would be right after the parliamentary elections that are to be held in Serbia.<sup>4</sup> The persistence to achieve a quick resolution that will help strengthen stability in the region and accelerate the progress of both Kosova and Serbia towards the European Union has been a permanent demand of the United States.

The Government in Tirana has also said that it finds any further postponement of the status unacceptable. According to Prime Minister Berisha, "any further delays of the status would complicate the situation, the stability of Kosova and of the region at a very delicate moment. A Kosova that is independent, free and democratic is the condition for peace and stability in Kosova and beyond."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The article was published in the daily "Shqip" November 17, 2006 (<http://www.gazeta-shqip.com/artikull.php?id=6446>), daily "Standard" November 19, 2006 and the Kosova r daily "Iliriapost" November 17, 2006 (<http://iliriapost.net/index.php?id=4748>). (<http://www.acnss.com/html/studime/1906statusi.htm>).

<sup>3</sup> Among other things, the Financial Times article says, "the EU must demonstrate that it is able to carry the burden because former Yugoslavia is too near to be ignored." Daily "Start"- 14.11.2006

<sup>4</sup> VOA/Balkanweb14 November: WASHINGTON, D.C. - the Status process will be completely shortly after Serb elections of January 21.

<sup>5</sup> Ilirjan Agolli: Mr. Berisha said, "With the referendum over the Constitution, Belgrade gave in a clear way its definitive answer on the issue of Kosova and its status. Any position that Belgrade will have any other position would be a dangerous illusion." - VOA interview 14-11-2006 (<http://www.voanews.com/albanian/archive/2006-11/2006-11-14-voa5.cfm>)

Public opinion in Kosova and Albanians across the region was wrongly led to believe that the UN Security Council would offer independence to Kosova before the end of the year. And sure enough, the postponement of the timetable for next year would not only lead to discontent but also cast a shadow of suspicion over public opinion in Kosova. The current situation should be monitored closely to avoid any security problems from developing. This situation also calls for more transparency on the progress of the status talks. The people must be informed that it is not the Security Council that will give independence to a country. In the case of Kosova, the Security Council has only one decision to take, and that is the abrogation of the UN Resolution 1244. This also explains the absence of the word "independence" in the plan that President Ahtisaari has prepared for the Contact Group. It seems that the wording seeks to ensure the consensus of the Security Council, or at least the abstentions of Russia and China, which would make the abrogation of resolution 1244 possible.

Following the UN decision, it will be the people of Kosova that will proclaim independence either through a referendum or a decision by their Parliament. The independence will be closely supervised and followed by clear steps toward the Euro Atlantic integration of Kosova. The process will be very similar to the one followed in the case of Montenegro. The state of Kosova will be recognized by individual state and after that it will be possible for Kosova to apply for a seat in the UN. To become a member of the organization it will need two thirds of the votes of the member countries.

However, Serbia is trying to stop at all cost the natural progression of this process. It is now trying to use the opportunity afforded by the international community for the purpose of changing the situation in the field. And Serb provocations keep coming. On the evening of November 7, following a football match in the northern side of Mitrovica, about 300-400 "fans" crossed the bridge over Ibar River and in a demonstration of force moved into the southern (Albanian) side of Mitrovica.<sup>6</sup> KFOR and UNMIK took no action. It was only the energetic intervention of the Kosova Police forces that made the Serbs turn back. The incident was not carried by the media and there were no comments made about it in public. When viewed in the context of the LANAC<sup>7</sup> plan and other

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<sup>6</sup> The incident was first reported by field observers of the Albanian Center for National Security Studies. This was the only body that published this fact and informed the public opinion of this test of force carried out by Serb nationalist circles.

<sup>7</sup> The Lanac Plan that will seek to annex portions of Kosova's territory in the event of it declaring independence was approved in August 17, 2006. A special body called the Committed for the National Defense of Kosmett has been set up to carry out the implementation of the operation. This body will operate under the direct orders of Serb Prime Minister Kostunica. The Committee is made up of the following people: Svetko KOVAC, head of the VBA (the former Kontra Obavestajna Sluzba - KOS) a structure still operational in Serbia and suspected for providing shelter to the Bosnian Serb General, Ratko Mladić; Zoran ANDJELKOVIC, of the Serb Socialist Party (SPS), a person with good command of developments in Kosova and a man of influence in the Milosevic security apparatus; Aleksander VUCIC of the Serb Radical Party (SRS); Nenad POPOVIC, from the Serb Coordination Center; Patriarch ARTEMIJE, of the Serb Orthodox Church, an influential figure among Serb minority members in Kosova. Momir JEFTIC, one of the most influential BIA officials and right side man to Prime Minister Kostunica, and prime candidate to take over the leadership of BIA after the Serb elections in January of 2007. Aca TOMIC, former Chief of Military Intelligence Service (KOS), who will be given the responsibility of leading the operations in Kosova. The Lanac operation would be launched in response to the alleged

information published in the Kosovar daily Info press on November 10, this incident presents a clear demonstration of force. The Serb fans tested not only the readiness of the international forces stationed in Mitrovica by also the reaction of public opinion also.<sup>8</sup>

While very improbable, several details contained in the *Lanac* plan are confirmed by the developments in the field. The goal of the plan is the division of Kosova and the improvisation of a new Albanian-Serb civil conflict. This conflict would provoke an uprising by the Kosova Serbs in the name of self-defense against alleged Albanian attacks. The goal of the operation is not a long term war. The objective is the undertaking of swift military actions to create a new reality in the field that is favorable for Serbs. Taking the Albanians by surprise and counting on the absence of an intervention by the international military forces, Serb professional units intend to penetrate deep into Kosova territory. They intend to fortify their positions around the Serb enclaves and create a chain of territories connected with each other and controlled by the Serbs. Once a new reality has been created in the field, all efforts will be made to find a solution through dialogue. Once almost half of Kosova will have been put under their control, Serbia will then try to play the role of a good negotiator that the international community in the new circumstances cannot do without.

According to the Serb plan, the most appropriate time for the launching of the operation will be the period ahead of the early general elections in Serbia when there will be an institutional vacuum in Serbia. This time period coincides with the local elections in Albania as well. The timing will be coordinated to coincide with a traditional end of the year holidays where any military or political reaction will be delayed due to the days off. There are also other voices who have indicated that the timing of the early elections in Serbia was determined with this plan in mind. Under the tension of elections and the accusations between political parties in Serbia, such violent actions in Kosova would be justified as a result of the anarchy created by the elections. It is believed that the operation also foresees the execution of political figures in Kosova to spark greater confusion there. The main architect of the plan is the Serb Prime Minister Kostunica who along with Hague inductees Mlladić e Karadzic are the ones that would benefit the most from these developments. Under the new circumstances, the Hague destination would be farther than ever.

The Lanac plan demonstrates that there are still diabolic minds in Serbia that share the same designs with Milosevic and his supporters who planned and carried out the ethnic cleansing of biblical proportions of hundred of thousands of Albania from Kosova. But the Lanac plan is not the only hope that the Serbs are counting on. According to reports

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provocations of Albanians. The goal is to prevent by force the independence of Kosova. According to the plan, upon declaration of independence, special police and military units stationed secretly in the northern part of Kosova would provoke a conflict of mid-level intensity that would force regular Serb army forces to intervene and annex part of the Kosova territory. EU diplomatic sources have said that they are aware that Serb Security Forces have distributed weapons to the Serb population in Mitrovica and other areas of northern Kosova. ( <http://www.dardania.de/vb/upload/shothread.php?t=20545>)

<sup>8</sup> The Kosovar daily "Infopress" published details of the plan in three consecutive issues in November of 2006. "Lanac"(the chain).

from the field observed by the experts of the Albanian Center for National Security Studies, the training of wahaby extremists is currently taking place in an area in the vicinity of the Serb enclave of Gracanica.<sup>9</sup> The contacts between these elements and the Serb Secret Service officials may hold in store new destabilizing scenarios that may aim to provoke a religious conflict in Kosova. In fact, the relations between Orthodox Serbs and the political Islam have been raised to a level of state relations. According to the Croat magazine "Nacional," Serbia and Iran have entered into an agreement that in the event of US forces attacking Iran, Serb forces would enter Kosova. According to the alleged agreement on security and cooperation between Teheran and Belgrade that was signed on January 22 of this year, Serbia will be able to attack Kosova under the assumption that the United States can not react because it is occupied with the conflict in Iran.<sup>10</sup> These scenarios should serve as warning signal not only for the international community but for the Albanian political and security forces in Kosova also.

Only the swift resolution of the status of Kosova and its independence would restore peace to the Balkans. It would increase the security parameters in the region and open the way to prosperity and Euro-Atlantic integration. "Many times in the 90, Brussels stood aside while the Balkans was in flames. We should not risk that happening again," Olli Rehn, the EU Enlargement Commissioner said in an editorial printed on the "Financial Times" on April 2, 2006. And for that not to happen, Kosova should get independent as soon as possible. Otherwise, the "powder keg" may explode again and the old Europe may have nothing left to watch. Perhaps this is exactly what Russia and China who are blocking the independence of Kosova want.

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<sup>9</sup> Observers of the Albanian Center for National Security Studies in field have observed that near the lake of Bodoc, near the Serb enclave of Gracanica, 30 to 40 men with wahaby-type beards were receiving military training. Serb Secret Service operatives stationed in the enclaves have been seen to meet them often. "Such Serb Parallel Security Structures operate almost legally and parade openly in Prishtina dressed in civilian clothes and driving Volkswagen golf cars"

<sup>10</sup> Teheran, 22. siječnja, IRNA: "Iran i Srbija potpisali sporazum o sigurnosti"; Beograd-Tanjug, 26. 1. 2006. 16:59 SPR: SiCG - MINISTARSTVO – IRAN BEZ OSNOVA TVRDNJE O SIGURNOSNOM SPORAZUMU IRANA I SiCG-a. (<http://www.nacional.hr/articles/vie/28624/3/>)