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A NEW KFOR: CHANGES FOR INTERNATIONAL SECURITY IN KOSOVO

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ABSTRACT

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The International Community in Kosovo has taken responsibility for security and further development of the entire Kosovo province since 1999. The cause of the conflict – Kosovar Albania's struggle for final status of independence hasn't been solved yet. On the contrary, economic stagnation and frustration from an uncertain future deepened animosity between Kosovar Albanians and Kosovar Serbs. "UNMIK's structure and mandate have been exposed as inappropriate to prepare Kosovo for the transition from war to peace, from socialism to the market economy, and from international political limbo to final status."¹ Kosovo wide ethnic violence exploded in March 2004 again.

KFOR as the NATO lead multinational peacekeeping force has been responsible for maintaining a secure and safe environment and support for the peace process. Results and analysis from the March 2004 crisis indicate that KFOR failed in its mission to prevent ethnic minorities from violence.

The study addresses some examples of KFOR failures, both conceptual errors during transformation in the past and mistakes of KFOR units reported during the period of crisis. The analysis provides explanation of why the Kosovo security system failed and what was the KFOR responsibility for the collapse. Finally, a new KFOR strategy and structure are proposed.

A NEW KFOR: CHANGES FOR INTERNATIONAL SECURITY IN KOSOVO

A number of old Czech traditional songs speak about battles with Turks. In fact legends of our ancestors describe historical events which haven't happened in the Middle East but in the Balkans. The Balkans region has been perceived as the least stable part of Europe for many centuries. Unfortunately, the end of the 20th century wasn't an exception. Decades of unsolved problems between different cultures, prejudice, and lack of tolerance caused conflict in the former Yugoslavia.

When all that ethnic violence was finally stopped by the IFOR deployment to Bosnia and Herzegovina and the civilized world called for an investigation of atrocities and reestablishment of the living conditions for refugees and displaced persons, another hell broke out just a few kilometers further, Kosovo².

Despite enormous diplomatic effort on the part of the UN Security Council, the NATO representatives and Partnership for Peace (PfP) participants during the period from May 1998 till March 1999 Serbian President Milosevic refused to comply with UN Security Council Resolutions 1199 and 1203. Serbian military and police forces also stepped up the intensity of their operations against the ethnic Albanians in Kosovo.³ For Europe, this unprecedented situation was treated in unprecedented ways – a bombing of the sovereign state of Yugoslavia without mandate of the UN in order to stop an ethnic cleansing on its own territory. On 23 March 1999 the order was given to commence NATO air strikes against the Yugoslav security forces.

On 10 June 1999, after an air campaign lasting seventy-seven days, NATO Secretary General Javier Solana announced that he had instructed General Wesley Clark, Supreme Allied Commander Europe, temporarily to suspend NATO's air operations against Yugoslavia. This decision was taken after consultations with the North Atlantic Council and confirmation from General Clark that the full withdrawal of Yugoslav forces from Kosovo had begun.

The air campaign achieved the goal – prevented Yugoslavian security forces from finishing their operations and stopped violence against Kosovar Albanians. Although an international community represented by the United Nations Mission In Kosovo (UNMIK) and KFOR took responsibility for security and the future of all people living in Kosovo, the follow-on deployment of allied forces hasn't prevented further violence between two ethnics. Basically three parties involved in the conflict (the international community with KFOR and UNMIK, Kosovar Serbs supported by Belgrade, and Kosovar Albanians and their Kosovo Liberation Army - KLA) had apparently expressed three different views for a Kosovo future⁴.

The question of final status over Kosovo hasn't been solved since 1999 and in fact has been the cause of many problems. "The international community entered Kosovo in June 1999 without an exit strategy and has taken only a few steps toward defining one. Security Council Resolution 1244, which mandates an international administration, is ambiguous on the duration of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia's sovereignty over Kosovo."⁵

KFOR Development in the Period From June 1999 Until March 2004

Deployment of the KFOR Contingent

An international peacekeeping force known as KFOR began deploying to Kosovo on 12 June (a few hours earlier Russian force from the peacekeeping mission in SFOR in Bosnia had deployed unilaterally to Pristina airport without consultation with NATO representatives.) The initial 48 000 troops in summer 1999 was the force exactly tailored for the purpose – to deter or in the worst case to fight the Yugoslavian regular security forces. Units structured in five multinational brigades fulfilled typical military tasks such as the monitoring of the Yugoslavian forces withdrawal, establishing and patrolling the Administrative Boundary Line, providing escorts, organizing and supervising disarmament of the KLA, building a KFOR infrastructure and conducting other military tasks in accordance with the Military Technical Agreement and Status of Forces Agreement⁶.

Bias against Kosovar Serbs and its Impacts

Kosovar Serbs were Serbs and as a part of that ethnic group were initially perceived by most of the Western Allies as perpetrators (although many Kosovar Serbs have been, in fact already once displaced persons from Srpska Krajina, currently located in Croatia.) Having still in mind the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Western media blamed Serbs for the worst atrocities, similar to the cases in Srebrenica, Sarajevo and others⁷. KFOR units represented by the NATO countries with the largest contingent from the UK could have been influenced by that bias. Despite proclamation about impartiality, some units maintained their attitude favoring Kosovar Albanians until the crisis in March 2004. It is also true is that Kosovar Serbs supported by radicals in Belgrade, created many reasons for such an attitude⁸. Their stubborn refusal to participate in the UNMIK proposals and projects, disregard of democratic elections, together with nationalistic pride of their "historical role of keeping Europe free from Turks" would seem to be a bit strange, especially from the perspective of peacekeepers from western countries. Initial exposure of the Russian contingent was perceived as an advocate of the Kosovar Serbs and underlined the picture, even with darker colors.

Development of the Relationship towards Yugoslavian Security Forces

Development of the KFOR relationship towards the Vojska Jugoslavie (VJ) and other Yugoslavian security forces was much faster and more flexible. The VJ represented an enemy at the time of the initial KFOR deployment. Although withdrawal of VJ and forces of the Ministry of Interior - Ministarstvo Unutarnjih Poslova (MUP) proceeded relatively smoothly, some incidents were reported. Three journalists died after being attacked by Serb gunmen and German KFOR troops shot dead several Yugoslav troops who opened fire on them. Close monitoring of situation on the Yugoslav side of the Administrative Boundary Line (ABL) was a daily task of all units deployed along the ABL. KFOR intelligence had collected all details about location, equipment, figures and even routines of VJ and MUP units deployed in the hilly terrain behind the ABL. Over time Serb political officials became more cooperative and the VJ and MUP complied with their roles.

Due to the durable compliance, the Serb Armed Forces later transformed from VJ to VSICG (Vojska Srbije i Crnej Gory) so that KFOR representatives could change their suspicious attitude. Serbs were no longer a threat to NATO and KFOR, but partners. Again, this attitude differed from nation to nation, but generally Serbs proved to be cooperative⁹.

KFOR Changes through Periods of Development and Transition

Development and changes of KFOR occurred as a natural process and transformation basically followed a plan. As the situation in Kosovo became to be more stable, units started to shrink and also routine tasks were changed. Peacekeeping forces became to be less robust, fixed tasks were slowly terminated, units were encouraged to use soft skin rather than armored vehicles and to perform a low profile.

The initial role for the KFOR contingent was to deter and expel Yugoslav security forces and to demilitarize the KLA. Clearly defined military tasks were fulfilled with excellent results. KFOR disarmed the KLA and has remained as a deterrent for any external threats, including the potential intervention of Serbian security forces.

In next the stage, KFOR focused its attention on security of the internal environment. Routine security procedures like monitoring, patrolling and searching were conducted by KFOR units, mostly from fixed positions. At the same time foundations for the future parts of the security system were established. United Nation Mission In Kosovo – Police (UNMIK – P) supervising the Kosovo Police Service (KPS) started working with the full support of KFOR.

The KFOR role as a leading security force in Kosovo was slowly changing as certain responsibilities were handed over to UNMIK-P and KPS. KFOR was supposed to only assist the police to lead operations.

New Concept for KFOR

In accordance with a plan of development and transformation of KFOR, a new concept of the Maneuvering Task Force was introduced beginning in 2004. The principle of the concept consisted in the total disassembling and restructuring of KFOR units¹⁰. The concept was rehearsed in the Multinational Brigade Center (MNB C) since the beginning of 2004 and the following rotations reflected this new structure and manning. There were many requirements to meet but the main presumption was that initiative and responsibility for the security situation will lie with UNMIK-P/KPS. KFOR will just provide assistance if necessary. Considering the issue from that perspective, the concept was premature because conditions were not favorable yet¹¹. UNMIK-P and especially the KPS were not prepared to take a leading role for the security issues.

Foreshadowing the Violence

Ethnic to Ethnic Animosity Continues

The Mid - March 2004 violence events didn't occur all of a sudden. Through 2003 and in the beginning of 2004 violent Kosovar Albanian extremists continued every few months to target Kosovar Serbs. The feeling of insecurity of that community had arisen. Also, Orthodox churches and monasteries had been systematically targeted¹². Attacks against personnel also accompanied attacks against property. The situation had been worsening since summer 2003¹³.

Each case caused demonstrations and physical attacks against Kosovar Albanians when passing Kosovar Serbian enclaves.

UNMIK/KFOR Loosing of Authority

KFOR and the UNMIK police were challenged by Kosovar Albanian militarized groups as well. The first alarming signal came from the German lead MNB(S) in summer 2003 when the KLA Veterans Association placed a provoking statue in Prizren¹⁴. The next months of 2003 and first of 2004 saw the first examples of violence against international peacekeepers. Members of a French KFOR patrol were seriously threatened in the village of Prekaz when members of a militant KLA family, the Jasharis, pulled guns on them after the soldiers repeatedly patrolled in and around its compound on 25 October.

The French withdrawal was seen as a weakness of KFOR, evidenced again on 13 November when a KFOR-escorted visit of displaced Serbs to their home village of Mushtishte was stoned by Albanian neighbors, and explosive devices were detonated in some abandoned houses.

Believing their own propaganda about a gradually improving situation, however, KFOR and UNMIK continued "normalizing" security in the divided town of Mitrovica. On 6 November 2003 French KFOR handed over responsibility for the "former" flashpoint, the main Mitrovica bridge, to UNMIK police and the multi-ethnic KPS¹⁵.

Minor violence in North Mitrovica during Prime Minister Rexepi's visit on 6 December 2003 illustrated insecurity and fed Kosovar Albanian sentiment that UNMIK was privileging Kosovar Serbs¹⁶.

In Pristina, a gradual deterioration in the security environment found expression in explosive devices threatening UNMIK and Kosovo officials¹⁷.

The annual cycle of KLA commemorative events on 3-7 March brought out large crowds in Pristina and Prekaz and refocused public attention on grievances that the "liberation struggle" was being insufficiently recognized. Frustration and disappointment had been increasing throughout all of Kosovo, and declining respect for KFOR and UNMIK was obvious.

Events in March 2004

Setting the Stage

The violence was triggered on the evening of 15 March when nineteen year old Kosovar Serb Jovica Ivic was shot and severely wounded in the Serb village of Caglavica, which is located just outside Pristina on the highway going south to Macedonia. Allegedly, it was a drive-by shooting. Local Serbs reacted immediately as they had many times before, by blocking the highway. For them it was another in a series of intimidating "terrorist" incidents, and they felt that KFOR and UNMIK were not paying sufficient attention. The Swedish Battalion (SWEBAT) Commander decided to organize a detour through the village of Gracanica in order to maintain the route from Pristina to Skopje. However Serbs remained, blocking roads in the Caglavica – Gracanica – Liplje Celo triangle all night. MNB(C) Commander ordered the Czech-Slovak Battle Group (CS BG) OPS Coy to deploy as a brigade reserve to reinforce SWEBAT units in the triangle.

The Triggers

On 16 March one of the largest Serbian enclaves in Gracanica, continued blocking their road as a show of solidarity, thus severing Pristina from the south of Kosovo. Albanian Kosovar drivers who tried to run the blockade were stopped and harassed by Serb villagers. In Caglavica, the Serbs organized a provoking march during which the crowd set fire to a police car, several Kosovar Albanian properties were damaged, and two KFOR soldiers fired warning shots when an Albanian's house was attacked. UNMIK Police and KFOR vehicles and movement were blocked as well and the Serb crowd's attitude toward KFOR became very unfriendly.

Kosovar Albanian anger was growing. In fact, KFOR and UNMIK Police were effectively allowing several hundred Kosovar Serb villagers to cut off a capital city of more than 500,000 Kosovar Albanians. To the Kosovar Serbs, their actions may have seemed the only way to get UNMIK's attention but in Kosovar Albanian eyes, they were demonstrating that a minority of 5 per cent remained the dominant, favored group in Kosovo.

Early afternoon demonstrations of the associations that "emerged from war" (KLA veterans, KLA invalids, and families of martyrs) were organized in Pristina, Prizren, Peja/Pec and many other municipalities (still reproducing anger over the 16 February arrest for war crimes of senior KPC figures from Prizren). Anger against the internationals was palpable. The pro-UCK newspaper *Epoka e Re* reproduced on its front page the next morning a slogan that attracted cheers from the crowd in Peja: "UNMIK watch your step, the UCK has gunpowder for you too!"¹⁸

The most provoking news directed to wound Kosovar Albanians hearts came on the evening 16 March. During that time, RTK -- Kosovo's public television channel -- broadcast an interview with a twelve-year old boy from the Albanian village of Caber, on the north bank of the Ibar near Mitrovica. Journalists reported - although the boy did not explicitly say so in his interview - that Serb youths with a dog had chased him and three companions, aged nine, eleven and twelve, into the river. The companions were missing, presumed drowned (two bodies have since been recovered). Updates were provided throughout the evening, with RTK running a news ticker underneath other programming that provided a sense of crisis. The next morning, as *Koha Ditore* and *Epoka e Re*¹⁹ blared the news that Serbs had caused three Albanian children to drown, the stage was set for an explosion.

The First Day of Violence

On 17 March Kosovar Albanians took the initiative and violence exploded at the one of the most sensitive of Kosovo's spots – in Kosovska Mitrovica. Kosovar Albanian rioters were able to cross Ibar River in order to create an initial provocation in the northern Serbian part of the town. Hundreds of Serb men had gathered on the north bank and mutual clashes began. The battle was initiated by a stoning and escalated when two Kosovar Albanians fired Kalashnikov assault rifles wildly at the Serbs on the opposite river bank. Disciplined Serb small arms fire was directed as a response against the Albanian gunmen. During the bridge riots a grenade was thrown wounding several Albanians and French troops. At the end of the day, four Albanians were shot dead and a French soldier died as a result of the thrown grenade. Dozens of people were wounded.

News about escalations in Kosovska Mitrovica reached Pristina quickly. Crowds of students, mainly from the University of Pristina, gathered in central parts of the city. From 3,000 to 5,000 students began marching towards the UNMIK headquarters, chanting: "UCK!, UCK!." Agitators then turned the aggressive mob to the southern direction towards Caglavica. KFOR sources described the first day at Caglavica as "a medieval battle" – hand to hand fighting from early afternoon to late evening. Kosovar Albanians pushed KFOR and UNMIK security forces from two directions desperately trying to penetrate into the Serbian enclave. A Kosovar Albanian who tried to ram his truck into KFOR lines was shot dead by a Norwegian soldier; firearms appeared in both Kosovar Albanian and Serb hands. Some Serb houses were set on fire as the mob was able to reach the village. A Swedish APC and a number of KFOR and UNMIK light skin vehicles were set on fire. The situation, with no available reinforcements, resulted in extremely violent acts of hardcore Kosovar Albanian groups against the Serbian housing complex "YUGO" in the Ulpiana District. At least one Serb resident was killed; others were beaten. Police and KFOR attempting to rescue Kosovar Serbs were beaten back three times by stones, petrol bombs, and sniper fire.

From the initial inciting points in Mitrovica and Caglavica, demonstrations and violence flared in most urban centers. German KFOR wasn't able to prevent the burning of old monasteries in Prizren. Similar situations happened in Gjakova/Djakovica, Peja/Pec, Kosovo Polje, Ferizaj/Urosevac, Lipjan/Lipljan, Gkiljan/Gniljane and Novo Brdo. At the end of 17 March the entirety of Kosovo was on fire, the security forces overstretched, and exhausted. Many of the Serb enclaves were left unprotected.

The Culmination

On 18 March, the day began peacefully, but very soon Caglavica had become a focus for mob probes again. KFOR was better prepared, blocking access by drawing a strict cordon across the highway at the top of the hill just outside Pristina with razor wire, backed by troops and APCs. Students from the University of Pristina again marched a circuit through the city, this time reinforced by their teachers and KLA veterans. Crowds directed by a hard core of extremists who sniped at the troops and provided demonstrators with weapons, proceeded up the Vetnik Hill. Medical staff from the hospital was present on the hill helping those affected by tear gas, serving almost as paramedics for the mob. Eye witnesses told of armed men sporting the Albanian National Army (ANA or AKSh) insignia, and of ambulances being driven up the hill with small arms for distribution. KFOR shot four Kosovar Albanians. Fighting was finally stopped by Kosovo Prime Minister Rexepi who arrived at the Vetnik ridge.

KFOR forces concentrated at Vetnik ridge left the outskirts of Pristina unprotected, especially Kosovo Polje and Obilic. Both were attacked by Kosovar Albanians, burning and looting. A few KFOR reserves who evacuated Serbs by APCs out of the scene were attacked by sporadic fire. A grenade was thrown at the Czech KFOR squad, but fortunately didn't explode. In both places, more than 250 houses or apartments were set on fire. A difficult situation was in all other parts of Kosovo. The list of violence was long.²⁰

The mass hysteria occurring on 18 March was even more pronounced than the previous day. Targeting was more systematic, extensive and cynical, and the volume of destruction was far higher. Most of the hundreds of homes destroyed during the violence were burned on 18 March. Some towns where no or comparatively mild violence had flared the first day experienced extensive ethnic cleansing on the 18th.

The Aftermath

On 19 March the situation significantly calmed down although nobody could predict what would happen next. Despite the arrival of the fresh British battle group, all KFOR units were overstretched, and remained deployed out of their camps with a main task to secure and protect the Kosovar Serbian minority. Any movement of large numbers of people was suspected. Buses and trucks were not allowed to drive. Main routes were monitored and systematically blocked. The situation remained tense during the next two to three weeks, especially on days when funerals of ethnic cleansing victims (or dead attackers) took a place.

4) ANALYSIS OF THE CRISIS

Preplanned Actions or Spontaneous Reactions?

During and immediately following the events of 17-18 March, international officials began to assert that the violence was more planned than spontaneous. Understanding where the riots came from, how they spread, and how and why they ended when they did is important both to prevent recurrence and for shaping future policy. The reality appears to have been a series of local outbursts and actions without central planning but with a high degree of local coordination.²¹ There are also indications that in at least one area, outsiders may have been involved.

Yet, there was another, more calculated side to the violence. There are reports of hardcore groups traveling long distances to join, some in buses. Groups from rural parts of Kosovo or Albania appeared to be involved in Mitrovica and Pristina.

Media in Serbia released statements that the action was organized and coordinated from one center.

The nearly synchronized appearance of many of the attacks launched from mid-afternoon to evening of the first day in locations such as Kosovo Polje, Lipjan and Obilic - just as KFOR and the police committed forces to Caglavica - speaks to a degree of command and control. There had clearly been premeditation and reserve-planning by extremist and criminal groups.

UNMIK police counted 33 major riots over 17-18 March, involving an estimated 51,000 participants, some of whom used military weapons. The attacks on Kosovar Serbs, their property, churches and monasteries, exploded all over Kosovo in both urban centers and villages. It remains unclear whether or not the attacks were planned in advance.²²

The two triggering events launched by Kosovar Serbs on 16 March - the Caglavica road blockade and the alleged responsibility for the drowning of three Albanian children stoked and detonated collective Kosovar Albanian anger. The image of Serbs as child-killers or the killing of children by Serbian Forces in 1999 is a particular mental wound among the Kosovar Albanians.

The behavior of mobs around Kosovo on 17-18 March was a whirlwind mix on the one hand of incoherent anger searching for direction and on the other of determined groups displaying cohesion and calculation²³.

Why did the riots fizzle out on the third day, 19 March? By the evening of 18 March, the tide began to turn. Prime Minister Rexhepi plunged into the crowd at Veterinik to urge an end, and PDK leader Thaci made a strong television appeal. The hysterical energy of the first day was ebbing and, within the formal organizations involved in the demonstrations, the consensus was turning to a half²⁴. The announcement of KFOR reinforcements, and the quick arrival, in particular, of a

British infantry battalion that was already patrolling Pristina streets on the morning of 19 March strengthened the atmosphere of restraint.

KFOR Failures During the Crisis

Two days of the worst violence in Kosovo revealed that KFOR wasn't prepared to deal with such events and actually failed to carry out its mission. The public order challenge lasting over the two days (33 major riots were counted, 51,000 rioters, some using military weapons were involved) would have stretched even the most coherent security structure to the limit. The violence revealed that KFOR and UNMIK did not have such a structure.

The two days of violence were a sad demonstration of limited determination by the security forces. Accordingly, post conflict evaluation reports that KFOR really resisted only at Caglavica, but even there, by committing most of Multinational Brigade Center's troops to a last ditch defense, it left the rest of Pristina region virtually unprotected.

It was obvious that KFOR HQ and even the Multinational Brigades were caught without a contingency plan.²⁵ KFOR did a creditable humanitarian job, but a terrible military one. Except at Caglavica, it was defeated.

The peacekeeping mission's security system lacked the capacity to anticipate. If KFOR and the police had been more alert dealing with initial events at the two starting points - the main bridge dividing Mitrovica and the Caglavica highway blockade – the fighting could have been suppressed²⁶. The intelligence flow of information wasn't fast enough to be able to be used to reach a proper KFOR HQ decision-making level.

The chain of command was exposed as disjointed. Over two years a process of "normalization" saw the gradual decrease of international troops, from an original 45,000 to 17,500 with a further drawdown planned, and KFOR's move away from manpower-costly fixed positions towards "area security." At the same time, many duties previously fulfilled by the UNMIK-P were being turned over to the KPS. On 17 March responsibilities were divided -- and obscured -- between KFOR, UNMIK-P and KPS. As afternoon wore into evening, coordination and force coherence began to fall apart. But the most visible failure was KFOR's²⁷.

However KFOR wasn't the only player on the security forces' side. Other parts of the security forces were UNMIK Police and KPS. The KPS had been trained and prepared as the only Kosovo armed force to deal with such public disorder. Unfortunately, KPS officers were left rudderless, without coherent orders. Their behavior was based on their individual attitudes driven by their own ethnic feeling and prejudice²⁸.

The different nationalities of UNMIK-P officers and their short acquaintance with each other had prevented any real esprit de corps from developing, and the deficit was apparent as lieutenants and sergeants had difficulty galvanizing unfamiliar subordinates into decisive but dangerous action. Several UNMIK-P commanders appeared to restrict their actions to protecting their own police stations²⁹.

It was in the divided town of Mitrovica that coordination between KFOR troops and police reached both its highest and lowest point, depending on which side of the river they were on³⁰.

Despite the satisfaction of some senior KFOR leaders, local elements saw it differently. Pointing to Kosovar Serb villages that were razed despite being close to major French and Italian KFOR bases, victims asked whether any senior KFOR officers would be held accountable. They talked of a "Srebrenica syndrome" in KFOR, and of the difficulty they will have in ever again relying on the NATO-dominated force for support.

KFOR holds a diametrically opposing view. Privately it speaks of a police collapse which obliged it to take over practically from the start. KFOR has moved to take back responsibilities it had devolved to the police and generally to assert itself over UNMIK. Within the security community, its interpretation of events and reaction is dominating.

KFOR's multinational brigades reacted in different ways to the challenge to their authority. The varied relationships with local counterparts, each developed during the violence in their respective regions, have left KFOR a much less unified force. The most evident difference was between the U.S. and French Multinational brigades³¹.

Overall, 17-18 March has highlighted the question whether KFOR should go further down the road of confrontation with the KPC or reach an accommodation with it. Among KFOR's multinational brigades, the strongest and most determined to hang on to its security primacy has been the European-Scandinavian dominated Multinational Brigade Centre. The battle it fought at Caglavica was testimony to this, as was its categorical refusal to call upon the KPC for assistance, which it rejected as a confession of weakness that would hand over security, probably irretrievably, to former KLA cells.

For extremists and criminals, 17-18 March demonstrated that KFOR could be defeated and opened up new possibilities. For Belgrade, the message that KFOR cannot necessarily hold Kosovo and guarantee Kosovar Serb security is also not lost. During and after the events, many politicians called for Serbian forces to return to Kosovo to protect the Serbs.

Should KFOR demonstrate the same impotence before a future ethnic cleansing riot, or perhaps even lesser violence against Serbs, Belgrade's politicians might face strong pressure for military intervention.³²

Conceptual Mistakes from the Past

Disconnection of the chain of command, especially between the Multinational Brigades headquarters and KFOR Main was perceived before the crisis. After years of KFOR transformation, KFOR Main HQ was in reality giving the impression that the institution just received reports from subordinate units and transferred them to NATO HQ in Naples. In accordance with the presentation given to brigade and battalion operation officers in winter 2003, the HQ wasn't manned sufficiently to act as a decision-making body (that message sent by an Italian senior officer with sort of black humor was in fact surprising for all of us). In fact, all operational shifts were focused on the enormous amount of reports and statistics that were sent to superior HQ everyday.

As a result, operations within the brigade sector were fully in the brigade HQ responsibility and rules and standards as well as daily life differed so much between the brigades. Operations crossing the brigade boundaries were discussed between brigades with a passive KFOR presence. Orders or directing documents coming from the KFOR Main level were usually unrealistic or very general, therefore providing many ways of interpretation³³.

The lack of centralized leadership had been in existence for some time and, during the first days of the crisis, became sorely evident.

Process of KFOR Transformation Without Reflection of the Developing Situation in Kosovo. The development and changing of KFOR occurred as a natural process and transformation basically followed as a plan. As the situation in Kosovo evolved, more units began to shrink and routine tasks were changed. Peacekeeping forces became less robust, fixed tasks were slowly terminated, units were encouraged to perform a low profile and to use soft skin rather than armored vehicles.

Rapid changes have been seen in MNB(C), responsible for the central part of Kosovo, including Pristina, after the decision for the British withdrawal. British strategy was very effective and their style of command of the Multinational brigade was very experienced and firm. Planned operations kept all units busy and involved, Brigade commanders clearly expressed their intent and made certain subordinate commanders understood. MNB(C) was able to rapidly change its posture from friendly, smiling Civil Military Cooperation focused peacekeepers to an uncompromising, determined and military capable force.

MNB(C) "Nordic" brigade with a Swedish dominated HQ was different. Command was more liberal, and subordinate battle groups and battalions were encouraged to act independently. Operations were focused more on training objectives than on real targets.

Individual search operations and an indeterminate strategy were the main activities in the first quarter of 2004. Stress was put on a low profile and “invisible presence”.

Although some reports evaluated MNB(C) brigade operations in Caglavica as the exception to an overall KFOR failure, it wasn't as glorious a success as was presented. The initial indecisive attitudes to the Serb highway blockade, followed by the detour going through the entire Serb enclave in Caglavica, were significant mistakes that worsened the situation.

Passivity of the brigade senior leadership evoked disillusion in the brigade staff and escalated when Irish members of the brigade staff decided to act on their own and, as a group of officers, conducted several rescue missions to Pristina saving Kosovar Serbs and UNMIK international personnel. The Brigade command was not consolidated before the evening of second day.

The situation was critical and overwhelming, and it would be easy to point out other shortfalls. Nordic MNB(C) didn't have as many assets available as the previous British MNB(C). However passivity, lack of anticipation and faulty analysis in the previous year resulted in a very low level of Brigade readiness in March 2004. MNB(C) battle groups were performing well but coordination, synchronization and making decisions at the brigade level lacked initiative.

Special attention should be paid to the Military Support Unit (MSU), a specialized force with combination of military and police capabilities. The best known representatives were Italian Carabinieri, but there were other contributing nations (France, Poland, Estonia and others). Those units were directly subordinated to COMKFOR. Although very capable and probably the best equipped for the tasks conducted by KFOR in the period 2003/2004, MSU weren't extensively and effectively used except during the crisis. With acceptance of a special status of the MSU and their psychological effect as a last resort in riot and crowd control operations, there is the question of whether it was a waste to keep such an expensive unit just for the purpose of riot control. In the conduct of tasks other than riot control, the MSU appeared to be ineffective whereas KFOR units equipped and trained for riot control achieved the same results during the days of crisis.

Lack of Cooperation Between KFOR and Other Parts of the Security System in Kosovo was criticized long before the crisis. In fact, problems with the synchronization of actions between KFOR and police (both UNMIK UNMIK-P and KPS) were the most significant cases of local failures. The following example describes one of the typical chaotic situations on the days of crisis. On 17 March some parts of the mob that drifted away from the Veterinik cordon came back into Pristina and selected the Serb Orthodox church in the old town market area as the next target. Most of them appeared to be teenagers. A small group of KPS officers struggled to stop their progress in the

narrow streets of the old town. They were not warned when tear gas was fired to disperse the young mob. The gas left the KPS officers reeling, but had a limited ultimate effect on the rioters as it drifted out to central Pristina. KFOR sources have suggested that some KPS officers sided with the rioters. In the confusion, as an Italian UNMIK riot police detachment arrived, one riot policeman was shot in the leg, possibly by a KPS officer, while another KPS officer was mistakenly shot three times by an Italian. When the Italian riot squad arrived at the church, the teenagers scattered. However, the security forces simply evacuated the priest and departed, leaving them to return unopposed for their next and ultimately successful attempt to set the church and priest house on fire.

General lack of cooperation, mutual distrust and low effectiveness of joint operations were the results of a long term process of transformation of the security forces in Kosovo. The initial 45,000 man KFOR contingent was designed as a military force, primarily responsible for a safe and secure environment. Over time, UNMIK and UNMIK-P were supposed to take over responsibility for security in Kosovo, and serve as the foundation for training, education and the command of the future security force – the local police KPS.

UNMIK and UNMIK-P had not obtained a very good reputation for many reasons. First, the manning wasn't very professional. With few great exceptions (usually policemen from Europe or the USA), a corps of international policemen suffered problems already experienced in other UN missions –lack of language capability, low level of general police knowledge, low discipline, problems using a car or weapon, and sometimes even interpersonal or race incompatibility. Most Chiefs of Police Stations had to fight those problems every day but they have never been officially mentioned. Many UNMIK-P members didn't have enough credibility to train, educate, and supervise their KPS counterparts.

KPS counterparts were the second reason for the mentioned problems. There were different categories of KPS policemen. First, policing in Kosovo is an economically attractive job – one of very few opportunities to obtain a low but regular salary; there are more than enough applicants. Not all of them are, however, qualified to be even chosen. Many local men asking for a job in the KPS had an unclear past; official records didn't exist, records from the Serbian administration were generally refused by UNMIK. It is not surprising that many mistakes were done in the situation – many people with criminal records or with “a shadowy history” in the conflict were hired, and then released. Corruption was a common, widely spread disease in the KPS. Some of individual KPS members felt more loyal to their local neighborhoods rather than to the professional job. Any joint KFOR/KPS operation became a public secret after initial planning. UNMIK-P policemen, responsible for the investigation of serious crimes (war crimes, drug dealers, murders) did not trust more than one or two local KPS members. KFOR units planning search operations could not declare the place

of the operation in advance. In fact, because KPS member had to be present, and actually lead the search operation, KFOR units conducting the operation had to pick them up, ask them to turn off their mobile phones, and took them to KFOR vehicles without telling where the units were going to operate. KPS members were resigned and obeyed that procedure. Based on KFOR experience, that was the only way to avoid the leaking of information on the KPS side. After that humiliating posture, it's obvious that KPS members were rather passive.

Those methods were common in 2004, despite all political proclamations about cooperation between KFOR, UNMIK-P and KPS. In fact, in that year, the transition of authorities between KFOR and UNMIK-P/KPS was (or supposed to be) at the stage when the police adopted an official leading role among other parts of the security system. KFOR would provide only assistance and requested support. The reality was, however, different and KFOR remained the force which had to maintain the initiative, otherwise the security situation would stagnate.

Another factor hampering better cooperation between KFOR and UNMIK-P/KPS was the lack of structural relations. Liaison between KFOR units and police stations depended on the will and individual attitudes of KFOR and UNMIK-P local commanders. Regionally, KFOR areas of responsibility didn't fit with municipal/police boundaries of responsibility. Participation in regular meetings was on a voluntary basis and again, there were significant differences between individual Chiefs of UNMIK-P. Most of them actively cooperated with KFOR but there were cases when the UNMIK-P Commander of a police station didn't want to cooperate.

As a result of all those problems, cooperation between KFOR and UNMIK-P/KPS wasn't generally at the level which was announced and which would be actually required during the crisis. Despite many good examples of great relations between KFOR soldiers and UNMIK-P or KPS members on the lowest local level, joint operations were less effective. In accordance with plans for Kosovo development, KFOR should (and KFOR did) hand over responsibilities to UNMIK-P/KPS but they weren't prepared to properly fulfill them. Gaps over responsibility arose in certain areas.

In that situation when competences weren't clear and cooperation on a larger scale wasn't maintained, the flow of information was different and orders lacked unity, resulting on a lack of trust. KFOR and UNMIK-P/KPS could not perform their duties better than they did.

Lack of KFOR Unit Cooperation. Unfortunately the lack of synchronization and organizational chaos was also identified between KFOR units. Joint operations for international units within the structure of the Multinational Brigade were common, therefore cooperation and command were rehearsed and the Brigade structure was functional. Also, units determined as a COMKFOR reserve (in that case NORTF), frequently trained for possible deployment to potential hotspots. During the crisis, Norwegians were able to cooperate very closely with local KFOR units and in fact,

deployment of NORTF and their riot control means was probably the main reason for the success of KFOR units at Veternik ridge south of Pristina.

As previously mentioned, due to a lack of coordination from the KFOR Main level, Multinational Brigades lived, operated and trained with a high level of independence. Brigade commanders were also independent in their intentions to cooperate with other brigades. Basically, if there wasn't mutual interest on both sides, joint operations weren't conducted.

MNB(C) was more passive in that case saying that there is enough to do within the Brigade's boundaries. CS BG commanders, remembering the very active British style of cooperation were seeking cooperation on their own with both French MNB(N) and US MNB(E). The US command was repeatedly postponing and canceling suggested operations and, in fact, joint action never happened. Suggested actions were related to our common task of monitoring the International Boundary Line and maintenance border crossing points. A joint approach towards that task could unify the KFOR attitude towards the Serb counterparts. Other parts of cooperation were focused on patrolling very remote areas located along the boundary between the CS BG and the U.S. unit. There was also an issue of the local police station which was responsible for the area located in both MNB(C) and MNB (E) areas of responsibility. Again, a lack of interest from the U.S. side ensured that nothing was done.

A different situation took place on the French side. In fact, the French command was very active and initiated a series of exercises with MNB(C) units, as well as with other brigades. Contacts were good at all levels; commanders and their subordinates knew their counterparts personally. Finally, there was a great improvement in the situation on 19 March when the CS BG took responsibility over a new extended area of operations. The commander of MNB(C) decided to recuperate and retask units overnight. One of the tasks for the CS BG was to take over hotspots, such as the town of Obilic and village of Babin Most. Swedish troops responsible for that area left for a rest without waiting for successors. Because of good relations, the CS BG requested assistance for the critical area located along the boundary with the French MNB(N). Morocco Company, attached to MNB (N), operating on the other side of boundary, was then tasked to provide initial support and accommodate a night time deployment.

Cooperation between units from different brigades was the exception rather than the rule. Everything was done on a voluntary bilateral basis, without higher HQ intent or direction. Communication between brigades wasn't direct and transmission of classified information, impossible. Most reliable tools for quick communication were personal mobile phones. (These problems were even more significant when the German Task Force from MNB(S) was deployed to the MNB(C) area of responsibility in order to reinforce the brigade in a period of rotation.)

Reshaping of KFOR

The violence in March 2004 revealed Kosovar Albanian society as dangerously unstable. Kosovar Albanians had forever lost the cherished image of victimization in two bad days.³⁴ Those alarming events called for change or at least a revision of strategy. Unfortunately, self-reproducing and self-maintaining reflexes of UNMIK tended to eliminate the possibility of radical thinking and critical assessment. UNMIK has moved to an easy path of analysis, when the violence was pre-planned and organized by a unified, clandestine group of extremists. This was an anomaly that can be divorced from ongoing processes. Instead of acknowledging, even protesting, that the policy and mandate that the international community gave them to work within is explosively inadequate, UNMIK has started again to paint reality to fit the policy. It is a recipe for disaster.³⁵

The position of KFOR as a main guarantor of the safe and secure environment isn't easy. Unresolved status of Kosovo, clear ethnic animosity, economical stagnation and slowly disappearing credit of UNMIK institutions are difficult conditions to operate in. The process of self reflection within the KFOR units began immediately after the situation in March calmed down. Especially the units and leadership present during the violence in Kosovo produced a number of inspiring lessons learned. Some suggestions were accepted by higher national commands but most of them have evaporated with new rotations.³⁶ COMKFOR General Kamerhoff (GE) stated in an internal document analyzing KFOR performance that KFOR was caught surprised, overwhelmed, and security measures in many cases failed. A few months later his successor continued with the same structure and with the previous strategy of transitioning authorities to UNMIK-P.

Revised Strategy

KFOR, as a pure military structure, requires a clear end state for its planning, development and functions. A desirable situation would be to have a clear status of Kosovo and a timeline to achieve particular phases, however, the international community has not yet expressed clear intent. Any possible solution intended to end the current situation has been recognized as a factor which would upset the dissatisfied side and cause deterioration again (the Albanian majority's demands for independence on the basis of self-determination in contrast with Serbian' insistence for sovereignty of the entire Federation of Serbia and Montenegro, including the Kosovo region.)

However, having a capable, flexible and determined security force in that vague situation is even more important. In reality, the process of reconciliation in Kosovo moves ahead very

slowly and should be reflected accordingly in KFOR's strategy. KFOR focus on sustainment of the current status quo can only be temporary and future transformation and development are inevitable. However, transition steps shouldn't be made before required conditions for success are introduced.

Revision of the KFOR strategy isn't possible without consideration of UNMIK policy, because KFOR and UNMIK both are equal partners and substitutes. The weakest point of the UNMIK peacekeeping mission in Kosovo is that it wasn't designed for the delivery of economic development.³⁷ Social, institutional and security development won't change without new directions that lead away from economic stagnation. Possible changes were recommended by the International Crisis Group in their report No 155.³⁸

Due to very slow progress in this process, KFOR should maintain a sustainable secure internal environment, including safety of all ethnic groups and enforcement of compliance with the conditions of the Military Technical Agreement and the UCK Undertaking. In reality for NATO, it means increasing the capacity of KFOR troops to deal with future violent disorders by equipping, instructing and training them better in the graduated use-of-force responses to riot situations, and by reinforcing border security.³⁹

Increasing capacity doesn't necessarily require higher numbers of troops. Final success and required readiness of the multinational security force could be achieved in many ways. First, KFOR as a whole could adopt certain standard procedure which could be called an early warning. It's nothing new; this procedure is used by the UN for indicating potential problems in the international environment. A similar system could be established within the KFOR theater of operations.

This requires a sufficient number of experienced observers-collectors, an analytic center probably based at the KFOR Main level, response HQ probably based at Joint Force Command in Naples, a network for communication and a capable, flexible force for response. The procedure needs to be exercised. This system uses the same principle as the New KFOR concept introduced in 2004 in MNB(C). The regional KFOR cell collecting information in its own area of responsibility reports an incident directly to the KFOR Main. The analytic group evaluates the incident under the other circumstances and indicates the beginning of the problem. COMKFOR tasks an appropriate force to deploy and deal with the potential problem. In the case of higher intensity operations, COMKFOR submits his requirements to the Commander of Joint Force Command Naples (COMJFCN).

Revised Force Structure

The current structure isn't suitable for the new concept. As was described in previous chapters, there are currently three multinational brigades and one multinational task force operating virtually independently within their own areas of operation. This fragmentation of effort has certain advantages but, especially during crisis, many operational disadvantages.

The new concept assumes the KFOR contingent is divided into four maneuver task forces of a brigade equivalent. Each brigade task force is able to deploy and operate in any part of Kosovo (requires reconsideration of some of the national deployment restrictions.)

Better attention should be paid to the equipment, organization and structure of the Multinational Brigade Task Force and nationally offered means to meet requirements. Numbers of troops, their character and weaponry in the contingent are decided at the national level. Figures and quality of troops should be annually evaluated at an assembly of participating nations with appropriate attendance. This would ensure that COMKFOR requirements are projected directly to the highest national decision-making body (Ministries of Defense or Foreign Affairs.)⁴⁰

Generally, the Multinational Brigade Task Force should have a balanced variety of equipment and troops, with high level of maneuverability, logistically independent and sustainable, with a high ratio of troops equipped and trained with riot control means.

Another point to consider is the standard of pre deployment preparation, procedures and mental preparation. Technical and operational requirements are generally met and in the case of any gap in common standards (search operations, riot control...) it is the brigade responsibility to train particular subordinate units. Less attention has been paid to psychological preparation. The initial KFOR troops were prepared to fight the Yugoslav Armed Forces and an obvious determination. The current troops rotating to Kosovo sometimes believe they are deploying to a peaceful boring mission. Yes – most of the time the mission has been very routine and operations stereotyped. It is also one of the reasons that KFOR was surprised in March 2004; KFOR wasn't psychologically prepared to fight at that time.

KFOR Roles

Internal Security Force. Despite proclamations in the past KFOR was and remains the main assurance of internal security for the province. Cooperation with UNMIK-P is necessary for the current situation and for the future development of internal security, it's very important to participate in the training of the Kosovo Police Service (KPS). UNMIK-P needs to develop together with KFOR a security contingency plan. KFOR, UNMIK-P and the KPS need to work

closer on a daily basis. KFOR has to help UNMIK-P/KPS improve command and control and enhance their coordination, especially on gathering intelligence on extremists and parallel structures. KFOR can provide the police with more training and equipment, and further increase their ability to face challenges like that in March 2004 by boosting their dangerously low morale.

The question remains over what to do with the KPC and their involvement. The KPC, as the UCK (KLA) successor, represents the resistance oriented side for the Kosovar Albanians. Although two brigades successfully cooperated with KPC leaders during the crisis their full integration into the internal security structure was questionable. The main reason for this was the origin of the KPC, their inclination to become the Kosovo Armed Forces, and very small progress that was made to convert future KLA fighters to peaceful firefighters and rescue teams. Opinion polls show KPC to be the Kosovo's most popular organization. This should be respected and considered in the process of building new security structures.

External Security Force. KFOR remains to fulfill this task in order to deter the Yugoslav Armed Forces from re-entering in to Kosovo. With the historical experience of the lack of compliance by the VSiCG and MUP, and current status of the non problematic relationship between KFOR units and VSiCG and MUP, KFOR should take the initiative and invite Serb Security forces for enhanced cooperation on external security problems (in the theater outside of Kosovo.) Closer cooperation based on international agreements could also probably prevent Serb forces from unexpected involvement in potential future crisis.

Stabilizing Factor. After March 2004 Kosovo remains a highly unpredictable place. 70% unemployment, fleeing of intellectuals out of the country, years of experience of state resistance and an uncertain cultural background are significant conditions under which Kosovo could turn into a society that shelters radical extremists. Some authors stress the involvement of radical Islamists in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the participation of Mujahedins in KLA terrorist attacks. There are some that believe that radical Islamists were behind the violence in March 2004 to divert attention from Iraq.⁴¹ Although those theories seem to be a bit exaggerated, Kosovo could be an attractive base for European Islamic terrorists if a strong military-police international presence isn't maintained in that part of Europe.

Analysis of "New" KFOR Strategy

Ends

- The final status of Kosovo is a difficult international problem without much precedence.

- Official talks between the international community, representatives of the Federation of Serbia and Montenegro and Kosovo haven't started yet. Expectations stated the beginning of negotiations in the summer of 2006.
- Without a clearly defined final status, no end state is a realistic goal. Yes, we want a stable, democratic and economically prosperous Kosovo. Two options are possible: an independent state or one that is an autonomous part of the federation. Two different courses of action represent two different ways of development and two different end states.
- The KFOR main mission is to maintain a safe and secure environment. This should be enough as "the end state" for the current phase of the Kosovo deployment. After a decision on final status, KFOR can a) assist a smooth emergence of Kosovo security forces into the federation security system, or b) assist building of the Kosovo Armed Forces and their integrity into the European Security System.

Ways

- KFOR should maintain a high level of readiness through the early warning standard procedures. Frequent rehearsal of high intensity operations is necessary.
- There should be closer cooperation with UNMIK-P/KPS, greater development of contingency plans, KFOR should stay visible, and maintain its role as the leading and coordinating force within the Kosovo security structure.
- There should also be closer cooperation between KFOR, VSiCG and MUP. This will enhance mutual trust and will ensure smoother integration of Kosovo society into the regional environment (in the case of both mentioned COA.)

Means

- Restructuring of the KFOR contingent in accordance with the new concept.
- Restructuring of C2 means.
- The Multinational Brigade Task Forces built and structured accordingly with stress on maneuverability, flexibility and riot control capacity.
- Increasing the numbers isn't necessary. Development of NATO reinforcements should be part of the contingency plans and should be exercised.
- Clearly articulated KFOR Rules of Engagement need to be introduced, based on graduated use of force response principles. National restrictions should be incorporated into contingency plans and understood prior to the use of a particular unit.

Feasibility

A new KFOR strategy is feasible. It isn't economically more demanding than the current one. In fact, the model presented currently by the Multinational Task Force (C) was adopted due to requirements for reduced costs. Without the transformation of KFOR Main, the model would be half way between old and new concepts.

Acceptability

A new KFOR strategy is acceptable for participating countries. Current restrictions on Kosovo wide deployments of some national contingents should be removed. Nations should pay attention to their maneuver force design to ensure their ability to deploy and sustain for a period of up to two weeks. The new concept is much more demanding on the KFOR Main HQ ability to analyze, control and command. The restructuring of KFOR HQ in Pristina would be required.

Suitability

A new KFOR strategy with a new concept of maneuver for the MBTF is certainly more suitable for post conflict Kosovo development than the current passive, cumbersome bureaucratic system. NATO COMJFCN would exercise more a progressive, active and modern way of operations.

Risk

The NATO part of risk is the ability to provide quick response for a deteriorating situation. The maintenance of sufficient strategic reserves for the entire Balkan theater is essential. NATO COMJFCN is to provide coordination and establish priorities between requirements coming from KFOR (NATO responsibilities) and BiH (EU responsibilities). COMKFOR and his staff take risk in the procedure of quick and correct evaluation for early warning. Neglecting this problem can cause delay and actual failure in the mission. Overall NATO represented by KFOR can't afford another failure. This would cause loss of credibility with a direct impact on European stability.

Conclusion:

People, who are really familiar with problems in Kosovo, characterize the current situation as a dormant evil. The Czech reporter Karel Rozanek is one of them, as a war correspondent has spent much time in Kosovo. His report dated on November 2, 2005 states that the "Reality of Kosovo is that Serbs live in separated enclaves and any entry into the Albanian area imposes serious threat... Talks on the future status of Kosovo are impatiently expected in 2006. Serbs offer more than autonomy and less than independence. Albanians refuse anything but independence and the international community speaks about so called conditional

independence.⁴² Prime Minister of the Kosovo Government, Bajram Kosumi, says that compromise is possible only if it means independence and a seat in the UN... Asking for people's opinion, he received the following answers: What you think we were fighting for? If it's not independence it will be a war which Europe has never seen before – say Kosovar Albanians. Serbs say to the contrary – all of us have served in the Army, we know how to fight and there is no where to retreat...⁴³

Despite future development, more or less successful western diplomacy or final results, KFOR has to be prepared to keep and maintain stability and peace in the region.

NATO Secretary General, Mr. Jaap de Hoop Scheffer expressed full support of NATO in his speech during the visit of Mr. Soren Jessen-Petersen, Special Representative of the UN Secretary General in Kosovo in NATO HQ on 12 July 2005. Let's believe that political will has been somehow projected on real security measures in Kosovo and KFOR is better prepared to face potential future tensions as a result.

Endnotes

¹ International Crisis Group (ICG), *Collapse in Kosovo*, ICG Europe report #155, (22 April 2004), i.

² During 1998, open conflict between Serbian military and police forces and KLA supported by Kosovar Albanians resulted in the deaths of over 1,500 Kosovar Albanians and forced 400,000 people from their homes. The international community became gravely concerned about the escalating conflict, its humanitarian consequences, and the risk of it spreading to the other countries. Figures in accordance with KFOR official website, available from <http://www.nato.int/kfor/> accessed 12 December 2005.

³ The operation of combined Yugoslav security forces allegedly called "Horse shoe" was designed to kill the KLA and to cut and paralyze all supporters. Due to connections of the KLA with broad Kosovar Albanian population, the operation was basically forcing Kosovar Albanians out of the Kosovo area. The actual existence of the operation "Horse shoe" is still questioned.

Dr. R. Craig Nation, *War and Revenge in Kosovo*, (NSPS, vol.4, U.S. Army War College-Carlisle Barracks), 241-242.

⁴ Kosovar Albanians declared their independence in October 1991, and have waited the last fourteen years for the international community and Serbia to recognize it. The lack of progress over final status and the absence of any indication how much longer UNMIK's mandate would last were sources of frustration. Kosovar Albanians scrutinize every action taken by UNMIK, in particular its relations with Belgrade, to judge whether it advanced the recognition of independence. They usually find it lacking. (In parallel, Belgrade characterizes every action of UNMIK with regard to setting up internal systems of government in Kosovo, another unilateral and illegitimate step towards independence.)

International Crisis Group, *Collapse in Kosovo*, ICG Europe report #155, (22 April 2004) 2.

Kosovar Serbs want to keep Kosovo as a part of the Federation of Serbia and Montenegro. Serbs offer a model of ethnically divided Kosovo – Northern Serbian, and Southern Albanian. Serbs are afraid of Kosovo independence and they do not want to allow the creation of another Republika Srpska (part of BiH) outside of their international border.

⁵ International Crisis Group, *Kosovo: Toward Final Status*, Europe Report No 161-24, (January 2005), 2.

⁶ Maintaining a safe and secure environment in Kosovo has been the KFOR mission since its inception. However, a number of incidents occurred as the KLA and Kosovar Albanians moved to the areas previously occupied by Yugoslavian forces. Massive population movements took place in the region when thousands of Kosovar Serbs fled in fear of reprisals by the KLA. Tens of thousands Kosovar Albanians moved in the opposite direction back to Kosovo despite the warnings about the danger of booby traps, mines, and unexploded ordnance. In the disorder and widespread destruction, KFOR was not able to prevent violence directed against Kosovar Serbs, their property and historical monuments.

⁷ There is no doubt that Mr. Milosevic, Karadzic, Mladic and many others are responsible for unprecedented killing of civilians, the worst since WWII. However, an objective picture of the situation in Balkans should include the Ustasha techniques of Croats dressed in the “Nazi” uniforms, or the brutality of Mujahedins fighting beside the Muslim Bosnian forces. To an unbiased student of the Balkan conflict it is difficult to judge which side was eventually worse.

⁸ Parallel structures created gap in communication between Kosovar Serbs and UNMIK/KFOR. Serbian citizens working for Beograd were often former UNMIK employees with NGO knowledge and paid better than their UNMIK counterparts. Parallel structures followed the Beograd strategy, different from UNMIK, however, mostly much more realistic. Administrators of parallel structures were more effective on a ground – they knew the environment better than foreigners in UNMIK, they got the confidence of the local people and in many cases Beograd supporters were faster in providing assistance.

Although parallel structures were capable and more effective to meet Kosovar Serb’s requirements, UNMIK representatives refused to cooperate or even to communicate. Some KFOR units had the same attitude and simply ignored results of Beograd involvement. Ignorance and lack of will to compromise on both sides negatively affected the results of reconciliation.

⁹ Good relations with VSICG and MUP appeared to be helpful particularly during March 2004 crisis. KFOR didn’t have enough troops and assets available to maintain patrolling along the ABL or to block crossing points. Attempts of smaller radical groups of Serbs to enter Kosovo with intent to cause violence were stopped by MUP on their side. Extremely helpful was the sharing of information about the situation in Serbian territory when the KFOR Main source announced exaggerated information about large paramilitary crowds approaching to Kosovo. Serb liaisons assured the leadership of the Czech-Slovak Battle group (CS BG) that nothing was true and that KFOR units could keep concentrating on hotspots in central Kosovo.

¹⁰ The basic KFOR unit would be a highly mobile and deployable Multinational Brigade Task Force (MBTF). Eventually KFOR units would keep most of their logistics bases but they would not have their own areas of responsibility. A task force or its subordinate units should be deployable to any part of Kosovo according to an imminent requirement and self-sustaining for at least two

weeks. The Task force would report directly to KFOR Main, and the KFOR HQ would have to adopt some of brigade responsibilities. Small KFOR cells would be permanently located in some of the larger towns in order to maintain relations with UNMIK, police, municipal representatives, and to collect intelligence information or assist with possible deployments.

¹¹ The crisis caught MNB(C) in the middle of transformation when units had already reduced strength although they had no approved concept. This had little effect to the operations however because MNB(C) operated in an "old" pattern and other brigades had not started with the concept of deployable MBTFs.

¹² Many Serb churches were destroyed during from the entry of NATO into the province in June 1999 until early 2000. Observers pointed out that the Kosovar Albanians were trying to remove all evidence that Serbs had ever lived in Kosovo.

¹³ In early June 2003, an elderly Serb couple and their son were hacked to death and their home was set on fire in Obilic.

Killing occurred on 13 August 2003, when two assailants hidden in bushes fired with Kalashnikov assault rifles on Kosovar Serb children and youths swimming in the Pecka Bistrica/Lumbardhi i Pejes River. Two were killed and four wounded.

Another provocative murder occurred on the evening of 19 February 2004. Two Kosovar Serbs were killed near Lipjan/Lipljan when roughly 50 rounds were fired at their car. Larger clashes between neighboring Albanian and Serbian villages occurred when a Serb teenager from Suvii Do village near Lipjan/Lipljan was shot and injured during Orthodox New Year celebrations in the second week of January 2004.

International Crisis Group, *Collapse in Kosovo*, ICG Europe Report #155, (April 2004), 11.

¹⁴ Regional KLA veterans associations descended upon Prizren and placed statues of KLA commanders killed in the war on two of the historic town's main squares. They did so in defiance of the elected LDK-controlled municipal authority, the police, and German KFOR troops. This was in contrast to their first attempt in 2001, which police rebuffed. The security forces have not dared to remove the statues, cowed by an implicit threat of violent rioting. The seeds of the defeat of the police and German KFOR in Prizren on 17-18 March 2004 were sown months earlier.

Ibid

¹⁵ With checkpoints, barriers, and the visible KFOR presence gone, UNMIK's narrative was that: "Kosovo's new police is able to take control. The people of Mitrovica, from both sides of the River Ibar, supported the handover." The "normalization" measures made many -- Mitrovica Serbs in particular -- actually feel less secure.

Ibid, 12.

¹⁶ Prime Minister Rexhepi joined a delegation from the World Bank for lunch at a North Mitrovica restaurant. The local police seemed unaware, and Rexhepi's all-Albanian close protection squad stood guard at the entrance. Seeing Albanians with machine guns on "their" territory, the Mitrovica Serb aggressive-defensive reflex kicked in and a crowd armed with stones gathered. It

attacked the restaurant from both sides. Neither the local police nor KFOR came to the rescue. Rexhepi escaped, but the melee continued, with the World Bank delegation and accompanying retinue chased in their bus into the grounds of the hospital. Regional UNMIK officials reacted with press releases suggesting Rexhepi was to blame for not giving sufficient notice, and identifying the target of the attack as the World Bank delegation rather than the prime minister. In response Kosovar Albanian media vented their fury on UNMIK for blaming Rexhepi and suggesting he did not have the right to go anywhere in Kosovo.

Summary of Reports, KFOR, (December 2003)

¹⁷ In December 2003 hand grenades were taped to the axles of two UNMIK police cars but failed to explode. Four kilograms of TNT with a timing device were discovered near UNMIK headquarters on 6 March 2004 after a warning was phoned to police. This began a pattern that included a false bomb threat; two small explosions in Pristina on 9 March; a hand grenade thrown at President Rugova's Pristina residence on 12 March; and an explosive device found outside UNMIK headquarters in South Mitrovica on 13 March. Intelligence Summary, KFOR, 2003-2004.

¹⁸ International Crisis Group, *Collapse in Kosovo*, ICG Europe Report #155, (22 April 2004) 19.

¹⁹ The OSCE prepared and issued extremely critical information on the role of the media in the March events in Kosovo.

²⁰ In the southern mountainous and predominantly Serb Strpce municipality, a crowd of Albanians arrived at the edge of the village of Drajkovac in the evening. They knocked at the first Serb house, shot dead a father and son, and withdrew. In Ferizaj/Urosevac, a crowd attacked Serb communities in nearby villages, and burned three Orthodox churches. In Prizren large scale violence continued. Teachers were inspired by the example of their peers in Pristina the previous day and formed the core of a mob that rampaged around the streets, smashing any shops that they found open. Two police stations were pelted with stones, and both police and UNMIK cars were burned. In Mitrovica, security forces drove small groups of demonstrators off with tear gas. There were minor clashes throughout the day: stoning of UN cars and KFOR vehicles, and some explosions. Sniper fire on KFOR and Serbs in North Mitrovica caused casualties. A group of Albanians with outsiders from either Gjakova or Drenica at its core attacked a Serb Orthodox church in South Mitrovica. In late afternoon, elements of the same mob that attacked the South Mitrovica church descended upon the Serb village of Svinjare, within 600 meters of Camp Belvedere, the principal French KFOR logistics base outside Southern Mitrovica. Several UNMIK police vehicles tried to get ahead of the mob and block its progress, as did a truck with Moroccan soldiers who were guarding the northern entrance of the village next to the base. The mob set fire to several houses at the north end of the village before the makeshift police/military roadblock deterred it from advancing. It pulled back, and security reinforcements arrived: twenty more soldiers and 50 Polish riot police. However, instead of consolidating their position, they were ordered to evacuate the villagers to the base and depart. During the evening and night, Albanian mobs were able to return unimpeded, and loot and burn every Serb house and annexed in the village.

South of Mitrovica, in the town of Vucitrn/Vushtri, two mobs converged to lay waste the Ashkali neighborhood. When Moroccan KFOR guards left, a crowd that included KLA veterans attacked and burned the St. Elias Orthodox church. The mob desecrated the cemetery, even disinterring human remains and joined with another mob, led by local criminals, that was attacking, looting and

burning Ashkali houses. More than 70 Ashkali houses were burned. To the south west of Mitrovica, in Drenica, the medieval convent of Devic was destroyed. When shifts of schoolchildren changed around midday at the high school in Skenderaj/Srbica, a large crowd of them began to walk west, through and out of the town. Reportedly, teachers, municipality officials, local activists and journalists made attempts to convince them to turn back, but were swept aside. In advance of its arrival, KFOR evacuated all but one of the Serb nuns and departed. The children looted and set fire to the convent, holding the remaining nun as a hostage until TV cameras arrived to record their "humanitarian" gesture in handing her over to the police.

International Crisis Group, *Collapse in Kosovo*, ICG Report #155, (22 April 2004), 47-51.

²¹ Crowds often featured a directionless, irate, uncertain majority, and a hard, aggressive, focused, determined, and armed minority. When the minority attacked, most would peel away.

²² There were probably more factors explaining why the violence was absent in some local regions. KPS sources claim that where they were permitted to run police stations and devise their own approaches, and that they headed off violence more successfully than at police commands where UNMIK-P merely used them as subordinates. KPS performance and proclamations were debatable and their professional responsibility for duty differed from place to place. Another factor noticed by the Czech – Slovak KFOR in the northern outskirts of Pristina was mutual assurance about "local peace" between the village mayors.

²³ From the perspective of German soldiers who were unable to prevent the Prizren Orthodox churches, seminary buildings, and monasteries from being laid waste, the mobs acted systematically. A battalion commander noted that "they knew exactly how far they could go" in attacking without provoking the soldiers into shooting. Crowds and deliberate traffic jams blocked German KFOR reinforcements from reaching the beleaguered detachments.

International Crisis Group, *Collapse in Kosovo*, ICG Report #155, (22 April 2004), 17.

Similarly, during the protracted battle in and around Caglavica, Swedish and Czech-Slovak KFOR sources interpreted the mass of Albanians pushing on the village over two days as a determined military-style opponent. However, if the whole mass of them were determined to break through into Caglavica, they could have done it easily.

CS BG KFOR reports, (March 2004).

²⁴ UPSUP and the three war associations issued formal notices of suspension on 19 March, albeit with lists of demands for UNMIK and the international community. "The world has understood the message that something is not going right, further escalation is totally unnecessary."

International Crisis Group, *Collapse in Kosovo*, ICG Europe Report #155, (22 April 2004), 18.

²⁵ Their troops often appeared unable to maintain a coherent use-of-force policy. They were caught between ineffective attempts to stop mobs with their bare hands, and to their credit, only firing live rounds at them as a last resort.

Ibid, 19.

²⁶ A mere dozen Serb villagers maintained the blockade of a highway at Caglavica at points. Proactive responses could have prevented much of the conflagration of 17-18 March. Instead, Swedish KFOR chose not to force the villagers off highway and monitor them – this soft attitude was common and appreciated by the “Film City people” (KFOR HQ) at that time. The task was to allow flow of traffic from Pristina south along the highway. Choosing a detour going through Serbian stronghold Gračanica was however one of the mayor mistakes. Even though individual UN police officers sensed the rising tension in Kosovska Mitrovica on 16 March, nobody paid attention to their warning. Individual KFOR officers predicted significant problems on the morning of 17 March but sent no troops to beef up security at the flashpoint bridge.

MNB(C) report summary, (March 2004).

²⁷ There are a number of testimonies about good and bad examples of KFOR soldier's actions. One of the most embarrassing stories comes from the western part of Kosovo, where the main Italian army base is a kilometer from the Serb village of Belo Polje, where heads of families returned in 2003 to rebuild their houses. When a mob descended on 17 March, and the villagers took refuge in the church, Italian KFOR troops did not dare approach in their vehicles but forced the Serbs to run to them through a gauntlet of young Albanians who attacked them with bricks and knives. If an UNMIK policeman had not shot and killed one rioter, causing the mob to pause momentarily, the Serbs would have been caught in the open and possibly killed. Nearly all houses were damaged or destroyed.

Another KFOR failure was reported by a witness from French sector during the French KFOR's attempts to defend the village of Svinjare, a few hundred meters from its major logistics base at Camp Belvedere on 18 March. UNMIK police reportedly gave KFOR two-hours warning that a mob was assembling. When it arrived, walking hundreds of meters along the camp perimeter and then burning the first house it reached, French troops and Polish riot police evacuated the Serb inhabitants. Looting and burning then proceeded throughout the evening and night, and all Serb-owned buildings were destroyed and livestock and pets slaughtered. Troops within the camp, including a company of Greek soldiers whose weapons had already been shipped home, did not oppose the mob. The arsonists appeared so confident of impunity that many scrawled their names and villages on the houses they gutted. A French KFOR spokesman justified troops' failure to emerge from the base to challenge the burning - saying they were too few in number.

In Prizren, local people said a more determined effort by German KFOR could have prevented the destruction of churches, monasteries and seminaries. There were reports of soldiers stepping away from their checkpoint positions as mobs approached.

International Crisis Group, *Collapse in Kosovo, ICG Europe Report #155, (22 April 2004)*, 20, and personal records.

²⁸ Nevertheless, many acquitted themselves bravely, rescuing beleaguered Serbs, Roma, and Ashkali from mobs. However, there were also plentiful accounts of KPS officers shying away from confronting rioting fellow Albanians. Some stood by as mobs torched houses or physically attacked Serbs. Worse still, some actually joined the rioters. Investigators have at least two instances in which KPS officers threw petrol bombs. According the reports of the CS BG KFOR units operating in Obilic and Podujevo, some KPS officers directed the mob against Serbs or their properties. Multiethnic police stations fell apart and Serbian KPS members refused to carry on their job under UNMIK-P commanders' command. Instead dressed in civilian clothes but armed with service weapon they organize homeland defense within Serbian enclaves.

Personal records, CS BG situation reports, (March 2004).

²⁹ On the evening of 18 March, school-age children were able to set fire to a Serbian Orthodox church in the centre of Pristina because despite the availability of at least 120 UN and KPS officers and the KPS dog unit at the nearby UNMIK police HQ, nobody with rank mobilized them to take on the crowd. Among the exceptions was the UNMIK-P commander of North Mitrovica police station, photographed leading from the front on the Mitrovica bridge, facing a stone-throwing mob without body armour.

International Crisis Group, *Collapse in Kosovo*, ICG Europe Report #155, (22 April 2004), 46.

³⁰ From 18 March onward, KFOR, UNMIK-P, and KPS coordinated closely in the Serb area north of the town and operated from a joint headquarters at Mitrovica North police station. However, in south Mitrovica the breakdown of coordination between troops and police reached its peak. On 17 March, police learned that French KFOR troops would not protect them or interdict snipers, saying they had no ammunition. On 18 March, acting on "totally untrue" intelligence from KFOR central command that 5,000 armed Albanians were on their way from Drenica, and 7-10,000 from Peja/Pec (phantom forces that did not materialize), French KFOR ordered UNMIK and the police (UNMIK-P and KPS) out of their respective regional headquarters in south Mitrovica. The French KFOR commander's brusque instruction to the police was: "Leave the building. Burn it down. Take away or destroy the computers". UNMIK-P withdrew across the river to North Mitrovica and Zvečan, taking computers or hard drives with them, but sensibly refraining from razing their headquarters.

The next day, French KFOR attempted to disband the KPS in South Mitrovica. KFOR then took over the Mitrovica south city police station and drove the police out with rifles at the ready. According to one report, troops aimed their guns at one group of KPS who tried to come back into the centre. The next morning, French KFOR checkpoints on the road south of Mitrovica refused to let KPS officers who live in the town's southern hinterland to go to work. On 23 March, UNMIK and the police were still trying to get back headquarters occupied by French and Belgian troops.

A competent source summed up the feelings of some police about French KFOR: "The only people they are actually prepared to fight against are us -- just like they did in April 2002".

Ibid, 20, 21.

³¹ Thrown together during the riots and their aftermath, the French KFOR forces and the armed Serb civilians of North Mitrovica were at one end of the scale. Their respective leaderships held several crisis meetings. At the other end, the crisis consolidated a close partnership between U.S. KFOR and the KLA successor organization the KPC, which saw them mounting joint patrols for nearly a week in some areas, with U.S. KFOR effectively granting the KPC the public security role it has coveted and been denied by UNMIK and central KFOR command.

Ibid, 23.

³² KFOR no longer has adequate forces in Kosovo to oppose a determined Serbian military incursion. It has replaced most of its heavy armor with lighter formations. Many in KFOR and NATO assume that Serbia would not jeopardize its EU future by a military move. They may not appreciate the shift in the political winds in Belgrade, and that returning at least some of Kosovo to Serbian control may increasingly be taking precedence over pro-European policies.

³³ A typical example of such directives was COMKFOR's Guidance for transition of authority over the crossing points at the administrative boundary line (ABL) in 2001. At that time the CS BG as the unit responsible for 102 km of the ABL between MNB(C) and the Federation Serbia and

Montenegro maintained one busy crossing point at Merdare (on route from Nis to Podujevo and Pristina). In May 2001 the Commander of the CS BG received the COMKFOR's Guidance with a task to handover the Crossing point within one month to UNMIK-P Podujevo responsibility. In attempt to fulfill the guidance, the following problems appeared; Chief of Police station in Podujevo got no direction from his headquarters. He lacked personnel and equipment had poorly trained KPS for that task. The Guidance brought a new term "Kosovo Border Police" – defined as a unit transformed from KPS with the task to start securing and monitoring the ABL in four months. This was nonsense. KPS in Podujevo had no assets available for this mission. Kosovar Albanians KPS were afraid to approach boundary line with Serbs on other side. The term "border" stated in the Guidance has an international meaning whereas the Administrative Boundary Line is a special term from the official documents agreed upon between Yugoslavia and NATO. Nobody explained to Serbs that such a change (Kosovar Albanian Border Units monitoring the other side of the ABL as well as maintaining the crossing point itself) was going to happen. The chief of the Custom Office responsible for all borders and boundary lines around Kosovo was not informed. In order to enact the unrealistic order, after many consultations with British Commander of the MNB(C) and Chief of Podujevo Police Station, the CS BG CO decided to begin a project of joint training of KPS officers together with KFOR soldiers at crossing point as a gesture of good will. A month after the Guidance was issued, KFOR CO General Valentine visited the crossing point Merdare and sharply expressed his disappointment that Czech KFOR soldiers were still at the ABL. They stayed there another six months until the KPS unit was trained, fully equipped, and psychologically prepared to act independently. The crossing point in Merdare was the first KFOR point handed over to KPS in Kosovo.

The CS BG summary of reports (2001 – 2004).

³⁴ International Crisis Group, *Collapse in Kosovo*, ICG Europe report 155, (22 April 2004), 24.

³⁵ Ibid, 25.

³⁶ The Czech Republic was one of the participants who reacted quickly. The following Czech contingent rotating in April was reinforced with 10 BMPs (armored vehicles which were so desperately required during days of violence) and with a company trained and equipped with the Riot Control Means. The Czech Parliament had to approve this historic first deployment of such a unit. The Parliament approved it in a remarkably short time.

³⁷ UNMIK based its structure on four pillars. I) police and justice; II) civil administration; III) democratization and institution building; and IV) reconstruction and economic development. The United Nations leads Pillars I and II. OSCE and the EU lead pillars III and IV respectively. An ICG report in December 2001 argued that the international community should maintain substantial assistance to Kosovo so long as its progress towards economic self-sufficiency remains stunted by the lack of a final status settlement. Instead, disengagement has occurred without reaching such a settlement. For example, European Union assistance to Kosovo has tailed off at an annual 55-60 million Euros for the years 2004-6, down from 336 million in 2001 and 147 million in 2002. As a result, Kosovo's economy has begun once again to contract. Economic pessimism has grown steadily since July 2003 and import growth was down in that same year. Reduced purchasing power rather than increased domestic production, low agricultural and industrial activity and investment explain the decline.

Ibid, 36.

³⁸ The ICG recommendations relating to economic development in Kosovo were addressed to the Contact Group Countries (U.S., UK, France, Germany, Italy and Russia) and other Members of the International Community. Making a substantial and sustained social, economic, and institutional development effort for the express purpose of preparing Kosovo rapidly for final status and transferring UNMIK's social and economic responsibilities to the PISG was the intent of the ICG recommendations.

³⁹ Ibid, iii.

⁴⁰ Other conferences are held with a similar purpose to evaluate the current situation and to address requirements for the future. They consist of different level of attendees and participants-often officers serving in the KFOR structure at the time. Those people have excellent professional contribution for the conference but very low chance to influence structure of their next national contingent rotation.

⁴¹ Gregory R. Copley in his article Kosovo: the Planned Terror Trigger (Defense and Foreign Affairs Strategic Policy. Alexandria: April 2004, Vol.32) uses many arguments to prove that the Osama bin Laden terrorist network built up in Balkans including Kosovo, is preparing for significant new slate of operations.

⁴² "Conditional independence" represents a sort of compromise acceptable for the international community. Details are described at Kosovo:

International Crisis Group, *Toward Final Status*, Europe Report No 161, (International Crisis Group, 24 January 2005) 21-30.

⁴³ Full text of Karel Rozanek's report is available from <http://www.ct.24cz>; accessed on 28 December 2005.

