

Albanian Terrorism and Organized Crime in Kosovo and Metohija (K&M)

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Introduction

Albanian terrorism in Kosovo and Metohija (K&M), as well as in the municipalities of Preševo, Bujanovac and Medvedja, is linked to different types of organized crime. It represents a permanent danger to the safety of the population and political stability, not only in our country, but also in other countries in the region.¹

The strategists of these activities want to ensure the legalization of their criminal activities and accumulated wealth and to enable the establishment of Greater Albania or Greater Kosovo in order to complete the territory they consider Albanian ethnic space and spread their internal market and, in proportion to their economic power, secure the political influence and participation in the top administrative state bodies on the territory.

Support of violence and permanent disruption of stability in the Balkans make it possible for the scenario to be effectively implemented in practice. Having established cooperation with the criminal organizations, the strategists of terrorist activities have strengthened their political position which they use for exerting pressure on the overall Albanian population as well as on autochthonous Albanian political subjects, enforcing collaboration and concessions.

Thus, the public gets the impression of complete homogeneity of the Albanian nationals and their unison endeavors toward a common objective. However, interests of some criminal organizations are hidden behind the political, ideological and national motives for the establishment of a unified Albanian state (regardless of whether they call it Greater Albania or Greater Kosovo). They tend to take part in the current processes of political and economic transition, i.e. transformation of the region as a whole, and to legalize their criminal operations.

Albanians, particularly those from Kosovo and Metohija, have developed a sense of collective identity which is a necessary prerequisite for organized crime activities. This very element, based on the sense of belonging to a defined group, has linked Albanian organized crime with pan-Albanian ideals, politics, military activities and terrorism.

A relatively universal model of terrorist operations in the world - which is, as a rule, usually funded from criminal sources (trafficking in drugs, arms and people, as well as in excise goods) - was applied, at one time, by the leaders of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), and was taken over, and is applied now, by the leaders of the Albanian National Army (ANA).² In this way, unhindered and permanent inflow of resources for criminal activities has been provided, while the leaders of KLA and ANA, as well as the most vocal Albanian patriots, have accumulated enormous personal wealth under the conditions of deep and long-lasting socio-economic crisis prevailing in the region. This is an additional impetus to the spreading of criminal activities in the region which is, still, an inexhaustible source of the so-called dirty money which is the basis for providing the continuity of terrorist activities and a permanent recruitment of new fighters.

A characteristic of the common model of internal organization of Albanian terrorist and criminal organizations is their compliance with the rule of territorial division, with the recognition of the interest zones and influence of certain families. Accordingly, in each of

the groups, the basic membership is recruited from the *fis*, that is, an extended family, or the clan that predominates on a certain territory.³

Precise territorial and clan division of the greatest part of Albanian society contributes to the preservation of traditional hierarchical structure, its distrust of the outsiders and very strict inner discipline of the members which is still maintained with the application of the common law of Leka Dugagjini or the clan honor code. The threat of mandatory execution of blood feud (*vendetta*) in cases of betrayal or dishonored agreement, provide for complete protection of the perpetrators of terrorist activities and criminal acts and, at the same time, is the most common cause for murder among the Albanian population.

At the time KLA was being founded, in the first half of 1993, organized crime was not so prominent in this region. Primarily for the purpose of arming the newly organized groups, members of KLA in the areas of Drenica and Metohija established connections with their relatives, migrant workers in Switzerland, Germany, Belgium, Sweden and other countries, who had already been involved in illicit activities, and established multiple channels for transporting the arms and equipment, as well as financial resources for the needs of K&M terrorists.

This way, a firm link of the key persons of Albanian terrorism and the leaders of organized crime in the region with the highly criminalized and politically manipulated Albanian diaspora, a very important factor in the operation of the partnership between Albanian terrorism and criminal organizations, was established.

At the same time, the sanctions imposed on the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia by the international community and the trade blockade of the FYRepublic of Macedonia by Greece have switched drug trafficking from the routes connecting Turkey with the Western European market to a new one, across the territory of Albania and K&M. A part of the money earned in these illicit operations was paid to some allegedly humanitarian funds that were actually used to sponsor the activities of KLA members.

Of almost DM 900 million that reached Kosovo and Metohija in the between 1996 and 1999, nearly a half was the money earned in drug trafficking, which made Interpol experts conclude (in December 2000) that the activities of fund raising for Kosmet and KLA were used for laundering of illegally acquired money.

KLA did not use the channels for illegal transportation of drugs only as a way to ship heroin to Europe in order to earn enormous profits, but also to smuggle arms to the Balkans. Drugs were directly traded for arms, or the arms were purchased with the money earned from drug trafficking in Albania, B&H, Croatia, Cyprus, Italy, Montenegro, Switzerland and Turkey.

In 1999, *The Washington Times* published a statement of American anti-drug agents that KLA was linked with a wide network of organized crime, with the headquarters in Albania. The documents they possess suggest that it was one of the most powerful organizations for heroin trafficking in the world, and that most of the profits generated from this illicit activity were channeled to the procurement of arms for KLA. The arrival of international forces to K&M resulted in the disintegration and formal demilitarization of KLA, but the organization has not as yet discontinued its activities.

A part of the membership re-directed their activities to the political level, through the Democratic Party of Kosovo (DPK)⁴ and the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AFK),⁵ while about 10,000 troops were included into the transformation of KLA into the Kosovo Protective Corps (KPC) and the Kosovo Police Service (KPS). Since the revitalization of economic activities as the only legal source of income for the population has not been adequately conducted, a substantial number of terrorists have continued to produce violence, actively pursuing their criminal activities.

The foundation of ANA, as a terrorist organization, was facilitated by the fact that the organizational and the operational core was composed of the members of former KLA determined to implement their previously set goals and complete the ethnic cleansing of Kosovo and Metohija and other, allegedly Albanian territories. Also, ANA organization mimics the KLA model, uses the same methods of operation, the same channels for smuggling weapons and even the same bank accounts and, allegedly, humanitarian funds abroad by means of which they provide significant funding for their activities.

It logically appears that the organized crime in K&M took over the structure and infrastructure of KLA, developed and branched concomitantly with Albanian terrorism and now represents a stable and expansive material and financial base of the Albanian terrorist and separatist movement as a whole. In June 2003, in his public statement for the media, Barry Fletcher, UNMIK police spokesman for K&M, said that one of the greatest obstacles the UN faced was the deeply rooted Albanian mafia that used nationalistic slogans of Kosmet Albanians whenever it suited their needs.⁶

1. Continuity of terrorist organization of Albanian extremists

The pretensions of the so-called Government of the Republic of Kosovo presided by Bujar Bukoshi, an asylum seeker in Germany, connected with the establishment of a parallel system of Albanian administration in K&M resulted in foundation of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Kosovo (AFRK).⁷ The formation was joined by officers of the former Yugoslav People's Army (YPA) of Albanian extraction, all advocating separatism, who wanted to set up a professional core of the Kosovo Army. The initiative failed and the leader of the group, Ahmet Krasniqi, was murdered in 1997 in Tirana.⁸

Since the initiative for setting up the AFRK was raised by DPK, due to the rivalry among the Albanian parties, members of these forces, although fully professionally trained, failed to attain more important positions within the KLA which the AFRK subsequently joined. However, the rivalry between the members of these two organizations still exists. KLA was founded by the most extreme members of the National Kosovo Movement (NKM) and the Popular Movement for Kosovo Liberation (PMKL), illegal organizations at the time, led by the members of so-called Marxist-Leninist faction.⁹

The first KLA armed groups in the region of Drenica were led by Adem Jashari of Donji Prekaz, and the membership was composed mainly of his close and distant relatives, usually persons prone to violent behavior and petty crime. Subsequently, they were joined by the former YPA officers and the Serbian police officers of Albanian extraction who refused loyalty to the state and its bodies, as well as participants in the armed conflicts in the regions of Croatia and Bosnia & Herzegovina with combat experience.

In spite of the fact that the initial membership of the organization did not have the necessary appeal to attract new members, KLA managed to become significantly large. This is primarily due to the advocacy for secession of K&M from the Republic of Serbia espoused by the leaders of the Albanian community who, in the light of the distinguished patriarchal relations, have the decisive influence on their compatriots. The terror enforced by the local terrorist organizations over "indifferent" part of the Albanian population had an almost identical effect. Organized in so-called "troikas," the extremists visited the heads of the clans and threatened to liquidate some of those of who had refused to send members to KLA units.¹⁰ Strengthening of KLA was substantially helped by crime money and the support of Albanian diaspora.

In March 1999, the German police reported that the increase in the heroin trade on the markets of Germany, Switzerland and the Scandinavian countries pursued by the Albanians coincided with the strengthening of KLA. It was concluded that KLA had

developed from a lightly armed peasant army consisting of different age groups into a power with tens of thousands of troops armed with rocket launchers, anti-armor weapons and AK-47 rifles.¹¹

KLA troops were the largest during NATO bombing when they were 20,000 strong. The brigades were founded which operated, without any significant coordination among them, in seven operational areas: Drenica, Patrick, Dukadjin, Shalja, Lab, Nerodimlje and Karadak (Maps [1](#), [2](#) and [3](#)). The Central Command was set up with the arrival of Agim Çeku to the position of the chief of staff. At the same time, territorial rearrangement was conducted resulting in disappearance of Nerodimlje as an area of operation.

Upon transformation of KLA, about 5,000 troops remained in the military structures supervised by international forces, mainly in the ranks of KPC.¹² Since KLA headquarters and almost full KLA command staff were taken over by KPC, headed by Agim Çeku, it appears logical that the formation has maintained the organizational and operational core of KLA (Map [4](#)).¹³ Engagement of these people, former terrorists, who continued, within the legal institution.

Soon after KPC had been set up, in the OSCE report of November 1999 evidences were presented proving that some criminal acts and abuse of the population were committed by the members of KPC. This was subsequently substantiated by the UN representatives in K&M who stated that they were familiar with the facts of direct involvement of some KPC representatives in the acts of terrorism committed in the region.¹⁴

In addition to the political motives, the formation of the Liberation Army of Preševo, Medveđa and Bujanovac (LAPMB) and the National Liberation Army (NLA) in charge of the initiation of armed conflicts in the south of Serbia and western Macedonia in the late 1999 was also influenced by the need of the Albanian terrorist leaders to channel the activities of a large number of idle KLA members. In the stated organizations, the command was taken over by persons from the local communities who had received KLA military training and acquired the necessary experience.

In the middle of 2003, members of UN police in K&M came to the conclusion that from November 2000 the activities of the Albanian extremist groups were expanding to the south of Serbia and to western FYROM where the territory of K&M was used as the sanctuary and base for enforcing these destabilizing operations.

The same, basically criminal mode of recruitment was used in the field, in an effort to convince the people that the amount of their national-patriotism corresponded to the number of the members. The criminal behavior of the members was manifested in a forceful seizure of property from civilians, particularly cargo vehicles and luxury cars, allegedly for the needs of the "liberation struggle."¹⁵

In the course of 2001, armed conflicts between Albanian terrorists and security forces in the south of Serbia were intensified. They were planned and were given logistic support by some members of KPC command, located in Gnjilane.¹⁶ Also, some more members of KPC, engaged in the performance of concrete terrorist actions, were identified among the LAPMB members.

Shefket Musliu, up to then just a local criminal, was the LAPMB commander, with headquarters in Dobrosin, while the regional headquarters was situated in Char (commander Muhamet Xhemali, aka Robeli) and Breznica (commander Ridvan Çazimi, aka Leshi). Major concentrations of terrorists were also present in Muhovac, Končulj and regions of Veliki and Mali Trnovac.

The KPC regional command and operative system provided the complete logistics for the activities of LAPMB and NLA. This was accomplished by having the members of KPC on

the territory of K&M, recruiting new members for these organizations, training them and transferring them permanently to the regions of crisis.

Although they were obliged to hand in all available arms to the KFOR forces, KPC members retained a substantial part of the arsenal and left it to be used by the LAPMB and NLA terrorists. These weapons found their way to the illegal market of K&M thus additionally contributing to the intensification of all forms of criminal activities in the region.

The LAPMB activities were mostly funded by illegal trade in cigarettes and drugs in Greece, FYROM, K&M and Montenegro assisted by several legally registered companies in the region.¹⁷ A part of the proceeds was directed to funding of several camps in K&M where terrorists were trained and used for the procurement of modern arms and for paying the fees of professional military instructors from some western countries.

Weapons and military equipment for LAPMB were supplied by the smuggling of arms carried out by some members of the organization who did it for their own profit although a part of the proceeds was set aside for the organization itself. The said goods were brought in through illegal channels, but also via border crossings with Albania and FYR Macedonia, such as Đeneral Janković, Jazinec, Tchafa Prushit, Morina and Tropoja.

Some members of LAPMB bought arms from the members of KPC who have established, together with former KLA members, their own channels for illegal trade, over the territory of K&M.¹⁸ After LAPMB had been demilitarized, some of the commanders organized illegal transport of a part of the arms to the territory of FYR Macedonia for the needs of NLA, whereby some of them generated substantial profits for themselves.¹⁹

Immediately after the demilitarization of LAPMB, its members, pretending to be the refugees from the south of Serbia in K&M, trying to avoid possible criminal responsibility for their participation in terrorist attacks, established the Liberation Army of East Kosovo (LAEK)²⁰ in Gnjilane. Expectations that this formation would continue the fight to annex Preševo, Bujanovac and Medvedja to independent Kosovo, initiated by LAPMB, did not come true, since this group has not, so far, recruited mass membership.²¹

After the official disbanding of KLA had been announced in October 1999, activities of about 40 armed groups of Albanians (with 10 to 300 active members, usually from the ranks of former KLA and individuals with criminal background) were recorded in the territory of K&M in different intervals.

Most of these groups were set up upon the initiative or through direct engagement of Rustem Mustafa, aka commander Remi, Fatmir Humoli and some KPC officers who operate under the supervision of Hashim Thaqi, Ramush Haradinaj or the so called Albanian secret services established in K&M.²²

The members of these groups focused their activities on intimidation of Serbian population and ethnic cleansing of the territory of K&M, liquidation of potential witnesses for possible Hague indictments against Albanian terrorists and elimination of political opponents and their collaborators.

Activities of the groups called *Ideali*, *Skifteri*, *BIA*, *Kashtjela*, *Large Eagles*, *Black Hand*, *Eagle's Eye*, *Black Eagles*, *Black Tigers*, *Zjari*, *Akatana*, *Siguria Vendit*, *Homeland Security*, *National Flag* etc. were particularly prominent.

2. Characteristics of ANA activities

In an effort to become the so-called umbrella organization of all Albanian terrorist and separatist groups in the region, ANA intensified its armed activities in 2003 which were accompanied by strong media coverage. The organization was founded in late 1999, but became more prominent in the second half of 2001.

In the course of disarmament of NLA in FYROM, the membership of which included also former members of KLA and LAPMB, the disarmament process was undermined at the very beginning by a mass transfer of the members of this organization to the ranks of the newly founded ANA without any administrative procedure whatsoever, by simple change of the badge on the uniform. In this way, Albanian terrorist continued their activities without any risk of sanctions by the international community that had pronounced NLA a terrorist organization, which was not the case with ANA.

ANA terrorists observe and monitor the movements and activities of the police forces and the army, set up headquarters, supply weapons for their actions and store them in special bases; they mobilize and train their members and provide for their transport to the site of action as well as their withdrawal to the safe territory.

From the organizational point of view, ANA is a military arm of a more comprehensive political group called the Front for National Unity of Albanians (FNUA) which also includes an intelligence service, called Albanian National Security (ANS), and Albanian National Fund (ANF) as the central financial body. [23](#)

FNUA was founded by the Revolutionary Party of Albanians of Tirana, whose sister party in K&M is a highly extremist UNICOMB (the Party of National Unity). Gafurr Adili, who uses an alias of *Valdet Vardari*, born in Kičevo, FYROM, is the FNUA president, while Idajet Beqiri, aka *Alban Vjosa*, who is the political secretary of FNUA of Albania, was a member of the Central Committee of the Labor Party, which was the only party in communist Albania at the time. The leadership of FNUA also includes several people from Albania, among them some academicians and public figures.

Following a territorial principle, ANA is organized into "divisions" with command centers. So-called *Adem Jashari* division, with the seat in Gnjilane, has the mandate over the region of K&M and south of Serbia. In West FYROM, i.e. Ilirida, the *Skenderbeu* division is active, with command centers in Debar and Tetovo. Their commander uses an alias, *Idriz Iljaku*. The *Mallesia* division covers the region of the same name in Montenegro, with the command center located in Ulcinj and directly linked to the headquarters in Skadar, while *Çameria* division is in charge of the activities in the south Albania and in the north of Greece (Map 5).

General Vigan Gradica is the ANA commander-in-chief, while Ekrem Asllani is the chief of staff. ANA leaders, most of them re-activated commanders of KLA, LAPMB and NLA, use the aliases of *Ilir Vardari*, *Korab Hoxha* and *Valon Flamuri*. Some retired or former officers of the Albanian Army also work for the ANA headquarters. [24](#)

Strategically and tactically, ANA prefers and pursues a guerilla style combat, with rapid attacks on the military and police formations in the regions of Preševo, Bujanovac and Medvedja, as well as on the territory of the FYRepublic of Macedonia, with combat participants retreating to their logistics base in Kosovo and Metohija, operating with the participation of some members of KPC.

ANA arouses provocations and organizes attacks on the territory of K&M in order to urge Serbs to move out and discourage their organized return. In the foreseeable future, pursuant to the well-known scenario used in the south of Serbia and FYROM, this organization plans an expansion of armed conflicts to the territory of Montenegro as well as to the north of Greece, with the final objective of a unification of the territories they believe are historically theirs.

Operational forces of ANA in K&M and in the south of Serbia are composed of about 650 terrorists, most of them situated in the region of Kosovska Kamenica and Gnjilane where their permanent training camps are located. [25](#) ANA members are equipped with light infantry weapons, hand-held rocket launchers, light portable anti-aircraft defense systems

and are trained in the use of mines and explosives, as well as the electronic equipment.

Parts of the terrorist organization are distributed all over Europe, since ANA has branches in many countries with the main task of raising the funds necessary to finance their operations, through ANF, with the seat in Zurich. Transactions take place on the Tirana - Debar - Priština route. Money is collected from the diaspora to the accounts of Daut Zuri in Vienna and the Karavan company in Tirana, owned by a Saudi businessman Jashin Kadi.

The money from Saudi Arabia for the Karavan company is laundered in the construction companies *Mak Albania* and *Cement Albania*, owned by Abdul Latif Sala. The money is, subsequently, paid in the *Dardania* bank in Tirana, owned by Bujar Bukoshi. Ismet Krueziu, arrested by international forces in August 2002, used to transfer the money to K&M. His activities were connected with *Jeta*, an Islamic nongovernmental organization funded by the Islamic Bank for Development in Tirana.

Procurement of arms and equipment for ANA is conducted by KPC, while the purchase itself is effected through some companies registered in Europe. Before his arrest, Daut Haradinaj, the former commander of *Dukadjin* territorial group, was the chief coordinator of these activities.

The action of mining the railroad bridge near Zvečan which was carried out in April 2003, showed that a certain number of KPC members were engaged in ANA.²⁶ After the action, ANA was pronounced a terrorist organization by Michael Steiner and its operations were banned on the territory of K&M. The appearance of ANA members in the villages reminds one of the presence of KLA members in 1996 and 1997 when they used intimidation and later even liquidations to force Albanian population to join them in greater numbers.

Thus, in March 2003, members of ANA perpetrated a typical criminal execution when they murdered Adem Ahmeti, from the village of Prekaze, the municipality of Srbica, and then attacked the family of Ramiz Fejzaj, from the village of Radavac, the municipality of Peć, who was seriously wounded. This action was preceded by a written warning sent to Fejzaj to be loyal to the "national issue" and stop all contacts with the Serbs.

ANA publicly proclaims its connections with organized crime, as illustrated by the fact that after a bombing attack on the premises of the court in Struga, in early spring 2003, this terrorist organization undertook the responsibility for the attack stating it was a reaction to the arrest of two Albanian mafia bosses in FYROM.

3. Data on the victims of violence in K&M

Violence in K&M is inspired by ethnic, political and economic motives. The most numerous and the most savage in the execution were the attacks of the Albanians on the Serbs and Montenegrins provoked by national hatred and carried out for the purpose of ethnic cleansing. Obviously, a large number of these crimes were premeditated and the investigation results frequently point to the involvement of KLA, or ANA now. Nevertheless, very few perpetrators were discovered, as substantiated in the reports of OECD representatives in Priština.²⁷

From the time of the arrival of international forces to K&M through August 23rd 2003, Albanian terrorist perpetrated the total of 6,571 attacks, out of which 5,962 on Serbs in Montenegrins in Preševo, Bujanovac and Medvedja, 207 on Albanians and 335 on people of other ethnic origins. In the same period, 1,206 persons were killed and, 1,319 civilians and 15 policemen were wounded. The fate of 846 persons, out of 1,156 kidnapped persons, is not known.

In the attacks in 2003, Albanian terrorists carried out 338 terrorist attacks (299 on the Serbs and Montenegrins, 34 on Albanians and 5 on people from other ethnic groups), a

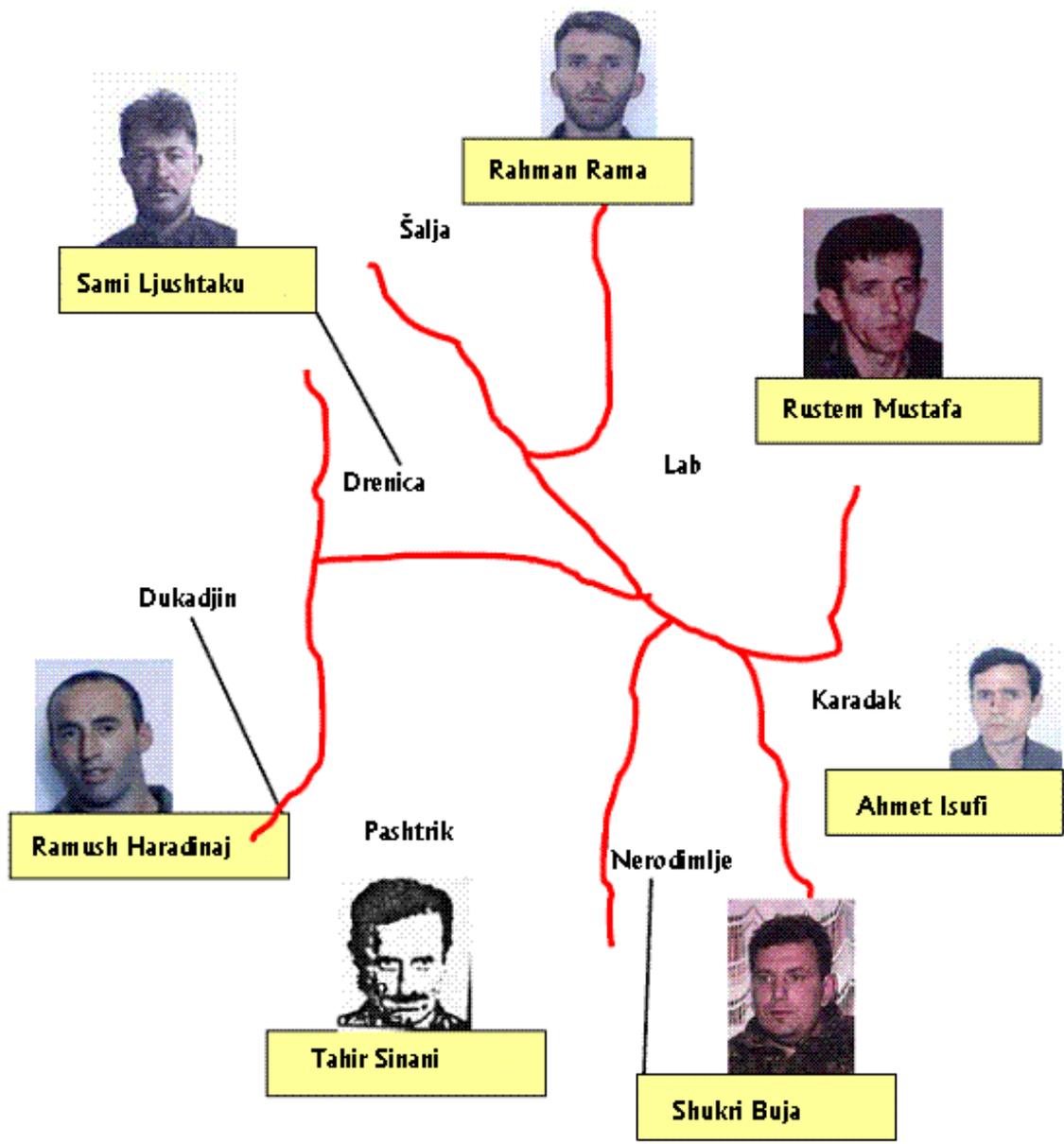
Serb was kidnapped (and subsequently murdered) and two Albanians (one managed to escape, while the whereabouts of the other are not known). An increasing number of murdered Albanian nationals, witnesses or potential witnesses against the accused members of KLA, is particularly frustrating.

The victims of these mafia-like crimes include Azem Musaj and Sadri Rexhaj, while Ilir Berisha of Janjevo, Rexhep Kelmendi of Peć, Sejdi Maloku of Obilić and others were also victims of these attacks.

Between July 20th and 26th 2003, as a retaliation for the sentences passed on a number of members of these groups of terrorists, explosive devices were thrown or planted at several locations in Priština, Podujevo, southern part of Kosovska Mitrovica, Lipljan, Kosovo Polje and other places. The targets of these attacks, among others, were the homes of Ibrahim Rugova and Nexhat Daci, leaders of DPK, whose prominent members have already been the targets of retributions with political background.

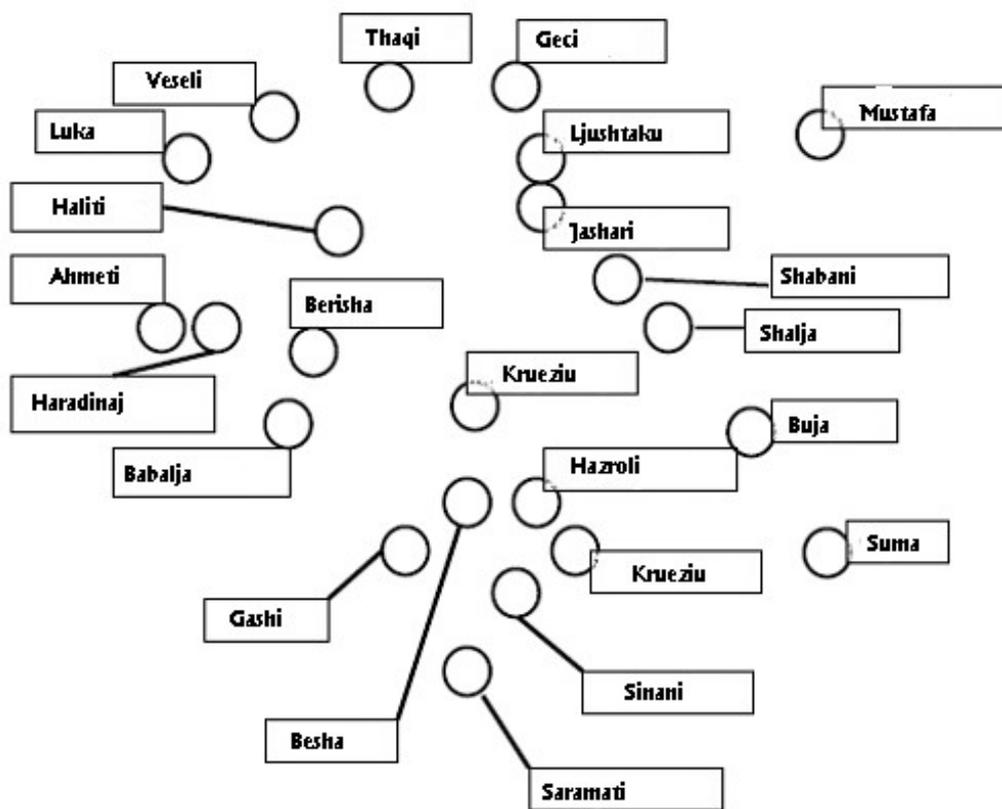
The existing rivalry between AFRK as a formation of professional soldiers and heterogeneous, criminalized KLA groups, i.e. ANA, as they call themselves now, is the underlying reason for a substantial number of the so-called political assassinations. Also, prominent members of DPK usually fall victims of these attacks.[28](#)

Commanders operative zones UCK (1999)



Map 1.

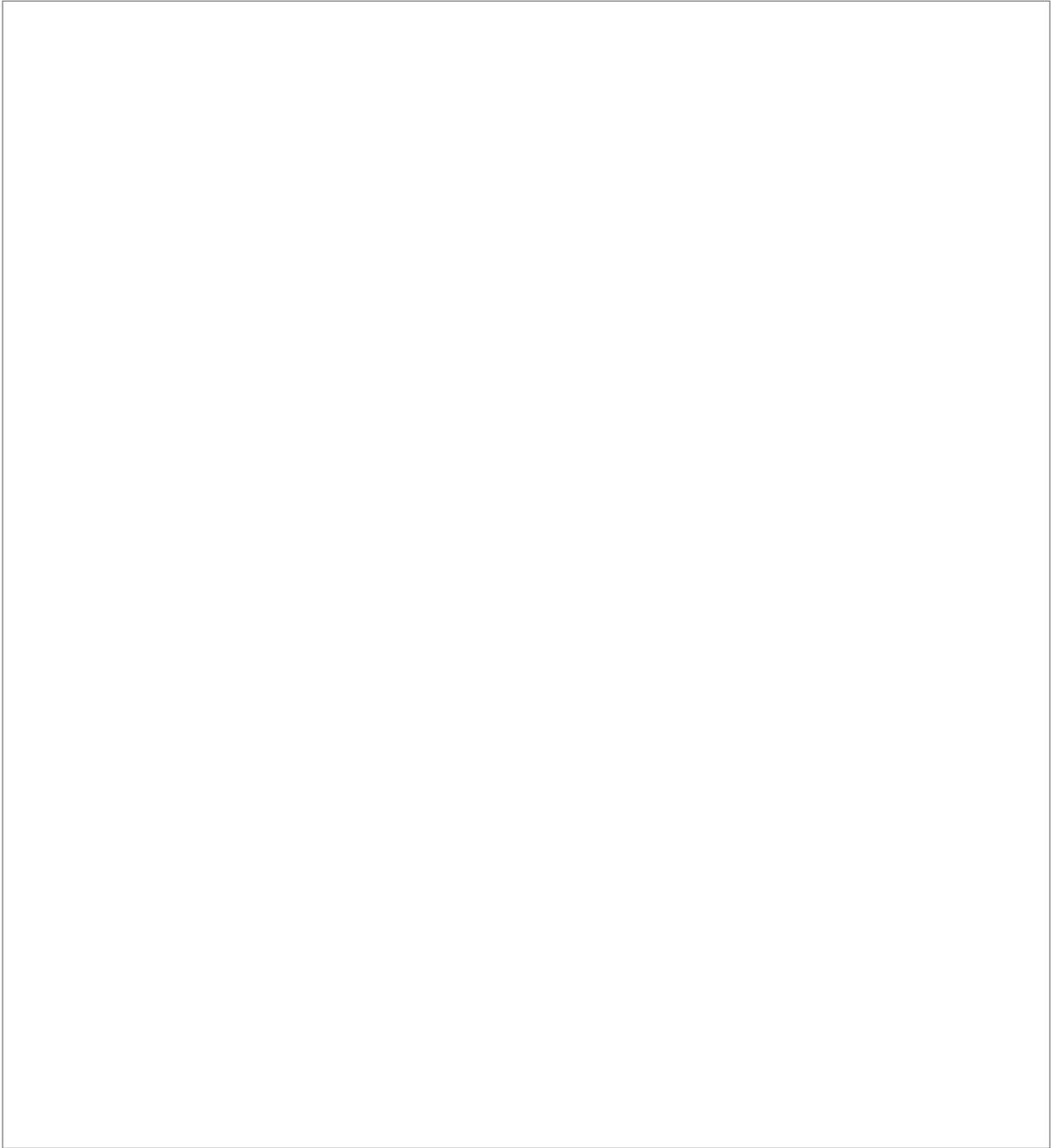
Map of organized crime clans



Map 2.

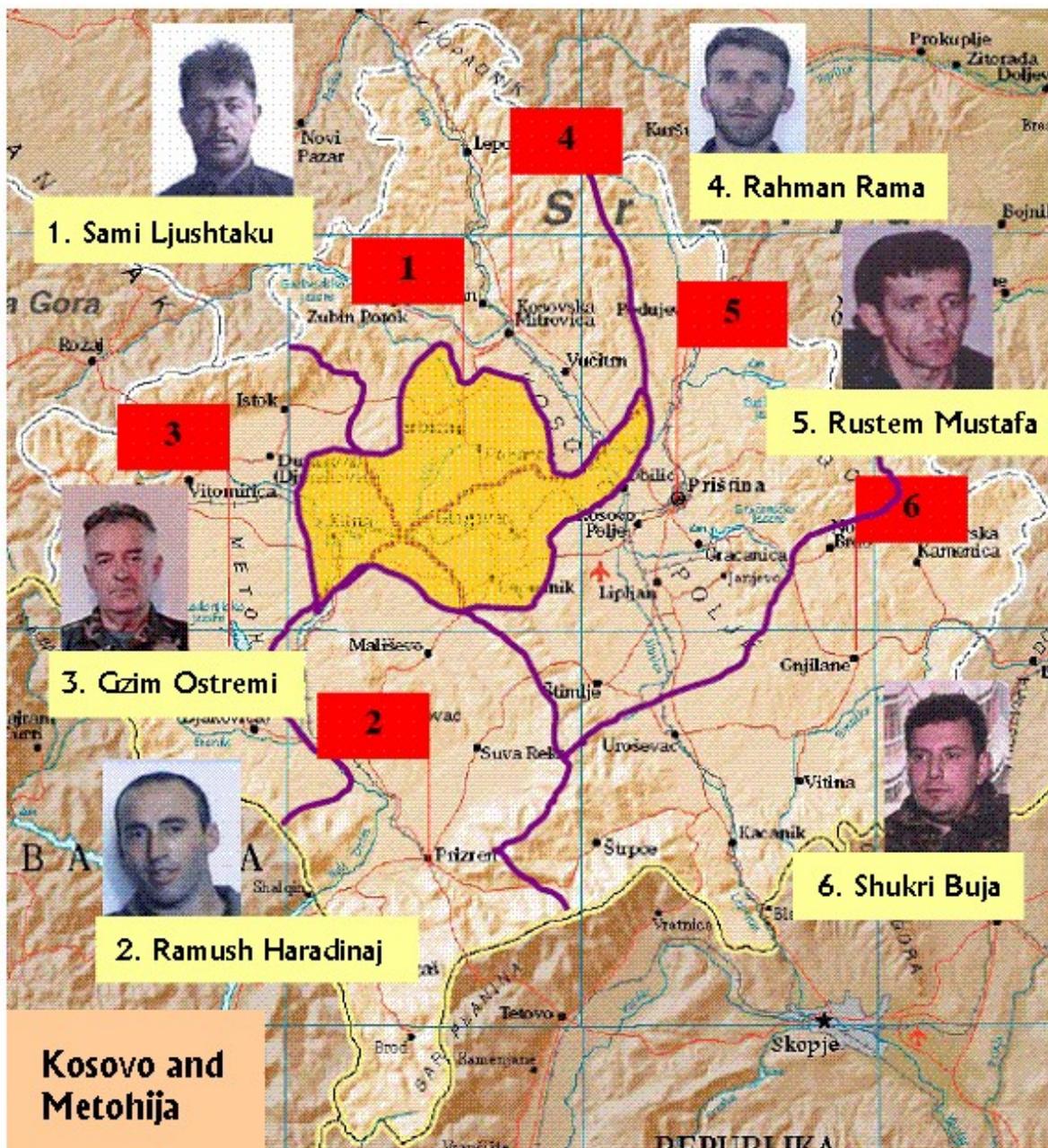
Geci, Ljuštaku, Šabani, Šalja, Veselji, Haradinaj, Ahmeti, Beriša, Babaljija, Krueziu, Hazroli, Krueziu, Sinani, Saramati, Baša, Gaši, Haljiti, Taći, Jašari, Suma, Mustafa, Buja, Luka

Kosovo and Metohija



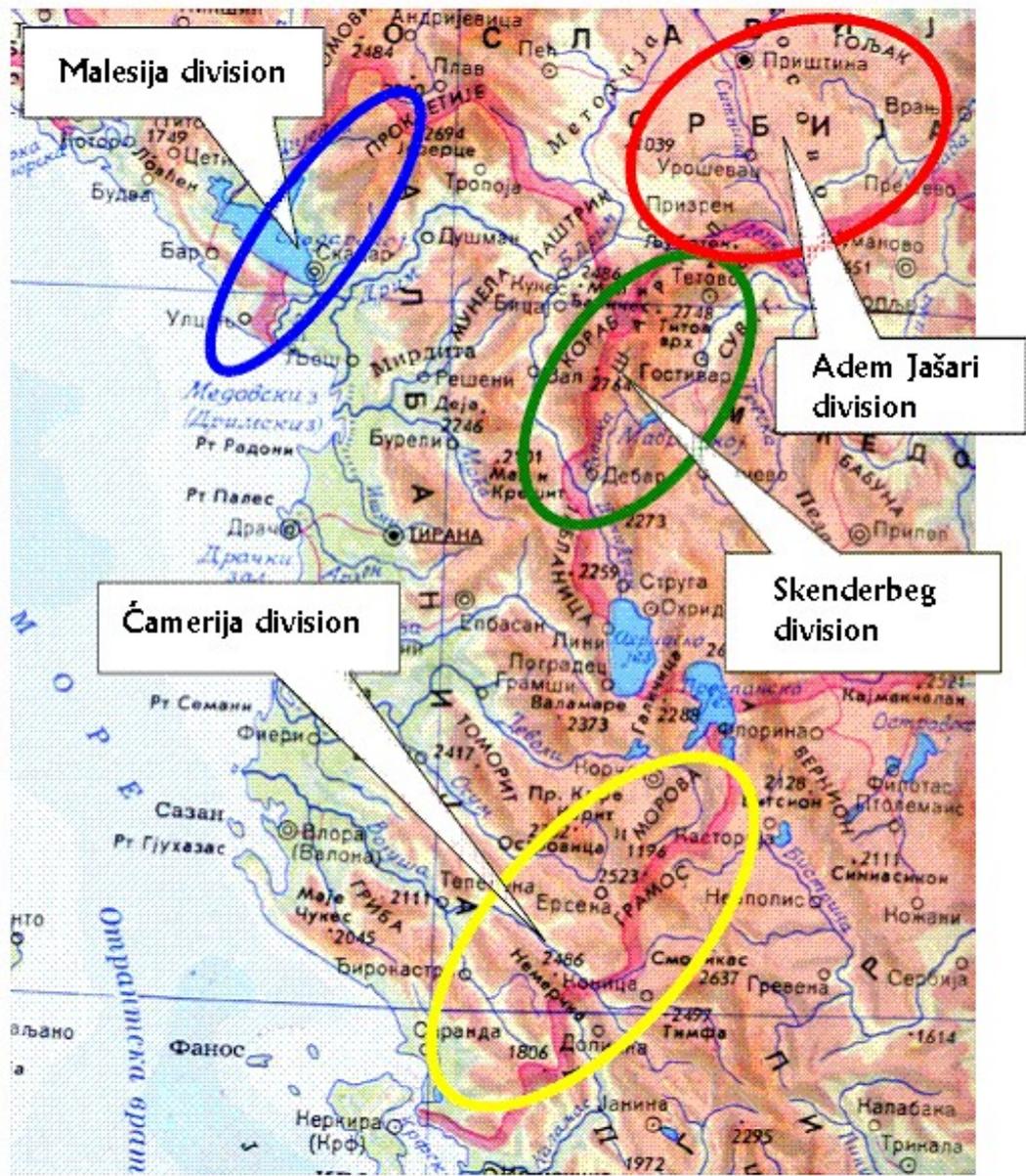
Map 3.

KPC- regional commanders (2000)



Map 4.

Territorial organization of ANA by divisions



Map 5

Legend:

- HQ of *Skenderbeg* division for the area Ilirida (Western Macedonia), command centers are in Debar and Tetovo
- HQ of *Adem Jašari* division for the area of Dardanija (Southern Serbia). Command centers are in Gnjilane and Kosovska Kamenica. For K&M the command centers are in Prizren and Priština
- HQ of *Malesija* division for the area of Malesija (Montenegro). The command center is in Ulcinj, directly connected with the division in Skadar;
- HQ of *Ćamerija* division for the area of Ćamerija (South Albania).

4. Organized crime

Criminal activities in K&M

The expansion of organized crime in K&M is a direct consequence of the KLA terrorist activities, some of whose leaders have used their authority in this organization to establish control over illegal trade in the areas under their (para)military jurisdiction.²⁹ Beside the drug trafficking, the organized criminal groups from K&M are also engaged in the illegal trafficking of weapons, cigarettes and other excise goods, stolen vehicles, together with the trafficking of people and human organs trade.

Very common among the Albanian organized crime activities are racketeering, blackmail and violence against both the members of the Albanian community in K&M and the Albanian migrant workers abroad who are forced to pay the so-called taxes to finance terrorist groups in this region.³⁰ Intimidation and the expulsion of the Serbs and other non-Albanian population from K&M also appear to be an easy source of income as the sales of abandoned apartments and other real-estate generate huge profits to some families. Former leaders of KLA use some of the money made in this way to pay the arms suppliers and to provide for the salaries of "meritorious" soldiers and their families.

Confirming the fact that the Albanian criminals have also held the key roles in the organized crime activities in many European countries, especially in connection with the sale of drugs, the representatives of the Council of Europe have stated, in their 2000 Report, that the organized crime in K&M is connected with the former members of KLA and the criminals from the north of Albania. The findings of European officials show that, beside the previously described criminal activities, the trafficking in human beings, intimidation of the members of the police and the judiciary and ethnically motivated violence are also represented in K&M, where ethnic cleansing is considered a lucrative business. Out of the 28 murders committed in January 2000, 25% are in connection with organized crime, and a highly disturbing fact is that among the perpetrators of the crimes, including those that are ethnically motivated, there is a growing number of juveniles. ³¹

The representatives of the Council of Europe pointed to corruption and its strong ties to organized crime, money laundering, economic criminal acts and the inefficiency of the financial institutions and tax policy as the key issues that troubled K&M. In addition to that, the courts are under-equipped, the number of judges and prosecutors is still small, their salaries are inadequate to maintain their independence, their safety cannot be guaranteed and therefore, they are under great pressure, so they can work efficiently only in those cases that are not connected with ethnic or political issues.

In 2000, the western media described K&M as "a gangsters paradise," that is, as a territory the western leaders ever more often perceive as a base for organized crime, especially the drug trade.³²

Most criminal activities in K&M are conducted by members of the family clans (*fis*) who control their respective territories. The clans are connected and closely cooperate with similar criminal groups from other European countries, especially from Turkey, Albania and Bulgaria, due to the fact that the main smuggling routes run through these countries.

The family structure is characterized by a strong inner discipline, which is achieved by a means of punishment for every deviation from the internal rules, so that the fear should guarantee an unconditional loyalty to the clan, with the provisions of the official laws considered to be secondary, not important and non-binding. Due to the fact that the clans are based on the blood ties, which is a factor that restricts the number of the clan members, the bonds between them are very strong, which makes getting close to and infiltrating into them almost impossible. Members of other ethnic groups can be accepted

only to execute certain one time or secondary jobs. Moreover, the Albanian mafia families are organized in 3-4 or more levels, which enables them to preserve the organizational action capability even in case some of its members or groups is captured.

Most members of the criminal groups in K&M have been active in the ranks of KLA and other Albanian terrorist organizations, where they have been trained for the armed combat.

Furthermore, they are known for the great flexibility when making arrangements with other, similar organizations (be they domestic or foreign), strong connections with local politicians and members of certain government agencies (the Customs, KPC and KPS), and their readiness and capability to perform complex operations across national borders due to the fact that they have strong support of the Albanian emigration community which is concentrated around different organizations and societies in Europe and the USA.³³

With regards to organized crime, the territory of K&M is divided into three main spheres of interest: the regions of **Drenica**, **Dukadjin** and **Lab** where criminal activity is controlled by certain leaders of the former KLA who are now active in political structures, as well as by former close associates of KLA who had financed its operations.³⁴ (Maps [6](#), [7](#) and [8](#)).

The area of Drenica, located on the strategic routes which connect Montenegro with FYROM, through Prizren, Klina and Istok, towards Kosovska Mitrovica, in the region of Shalja, is controlled by so-called **Drenica group**, loyal to Hashim Thaqi. This group is mainly involved in arms trafficking, dealing in stolen vehicles, in human beings, excise goods and, above all, cigarettes and fuel. Through his family connections, Thaqi has direct control over the local institutions through which he provides and secures an unhindered performance of the said criminal activity. The Thaqi family has ties with the Albanian, Macedonian, Bulgarian and Check mafia.

The territories of the Peć, Dečani and Djakovica municipalities make the **Dukadjin zone**, where the so-called Metohija group, led by Ramush Haradinaj, is active. The Haradinaj family is mainly oriented toward the illegal trade of weapons, drugs, excise goods and stolen cars, but also toward the racketeering of the Albanian population in K&M. Smuggled goods are distributed in FYROM, in the south of Serbia, the Raška territory and in Montenegro where it comes via the Peć-Kula-Rožaje route. Taking into consideration the close links between Ramush Haradinaj and the fighters of the former KLA, who joined KPC and KPS after it had been demilitarized, Ramush Haradinaj is in the position to have an indirect control over the border with these areas, as well as over the criminal and terrorist activities in this area.

The group loyal to Rrustem Mustafa, aka *Remi*, one of the most influential commanders of KLA and KPC, operates in the **Lab** area which is made up of the territories of the Gnjilane, Vitina and Kačanik municipalities.³⁵ This clan is mainly oriented toward drug smuggling and is closely connected to the Haradinaj family.

In K&M there are also other families whose operations are oriented toward illegal trade and smuggling and who conduct the described activities in cooperation with, or under the supervision of, one of the listed chiefs - Thaqi, Haradinaj or Mustafa.

The **Lluca** family is connected with the Albanian mafia and pursues the activity of arms smuggling, of drugs and of excise goods (cigarettes, fuel). It operates under the wing of Hashim Thaqi and Ramush Haradinaj and of the Albanian mafia.

The **Selimi** family, together with the Lluca family, controls the smuggling of arms, drugs and vehicles in the Dukadjin area. Also they impose illegal taxation on the Albanians and intimidate the political opponents of DPK. They are connected with Hashim Thaqi.

The **Kelmendi** family has close ties with Ramush Haradinaj and controls the smuggling of drugs and fuel, trafficking in people and money laundering in the Peć area.

The **Elshani** family operations are focused on the smuggling of arms and fuel. It controls the Vitomirica area and is connected with Ekrem Lluca and Xhavit Haliti.

The **Kitaj** family is the leading criminal group which controls the area between Klina and Istok. It is involved in the smuggling of stolen vehicles and the sales of explosives in K&M.

The criminal clan of **Suma** operates in the area of Kačanik. Besides racketeering and blackmail, it is also involved in weapons and drugs smuggling from FYROM to K&M and vice versa. The members of the Suma clan are connected with the group led by Rrustem Mustafa alias *Remi* from Podujevo.

The **Syla** clan coordinates a chain of organized crime active in K&M and FYROM and is concentrated on illegal imports of weapons, ammunition and other equipment.

The members of the **Agushi** family operate in the Klina area. They extort money from the Albanians whom they force to buy up previously stolen Serbian land and property in the previously mentioned municipality and blackmail potential buyers.

The **Geci** clan is active in the Peć, Kosovska Mitrovica, Srbica and Priština municipalities. It runs the smuggling of fuel and is cooperating with Xhavit Haliti and the Selimi family.

The **Babalija** clan is operating in the area of Đakovica. In cooperation with Ramush Haradinaj it deals in fuel smuggling from Albania as well as in drugs trafficking (Map 2).

Despite the fact that there has been a precise division of territory between the clans in which each family controls a certain area and the criminal activity within it, among some of the clans there is a rivalry whose origins lie in the political differences between them and the attempts of the groups to acquire more power in the respective region.

Sometimes these clashes are so intense that they take on the form of a blood feud (vendetta) in which all members of the rival families are involved. A good example is the dispute between the clans Musaj and Haradinaj. This feud, caused by political differences and an attempt of the Musaj clan to take over the arms and narcotics trafficking business from the Haradinaj clan, resulted in the murder of Sinan Musaj, and, shortly afterwards, in the wounding of Ramush Haradinaj. [36](#)

The execution of the members of the Kelmendi family by the Lluca clan shows the brutality which is inherent to the conflicts between the warring mafia clans. In that particular case, a woman was killed among others, what is not common in the conflicts between different Albanian groups, including vendettas.

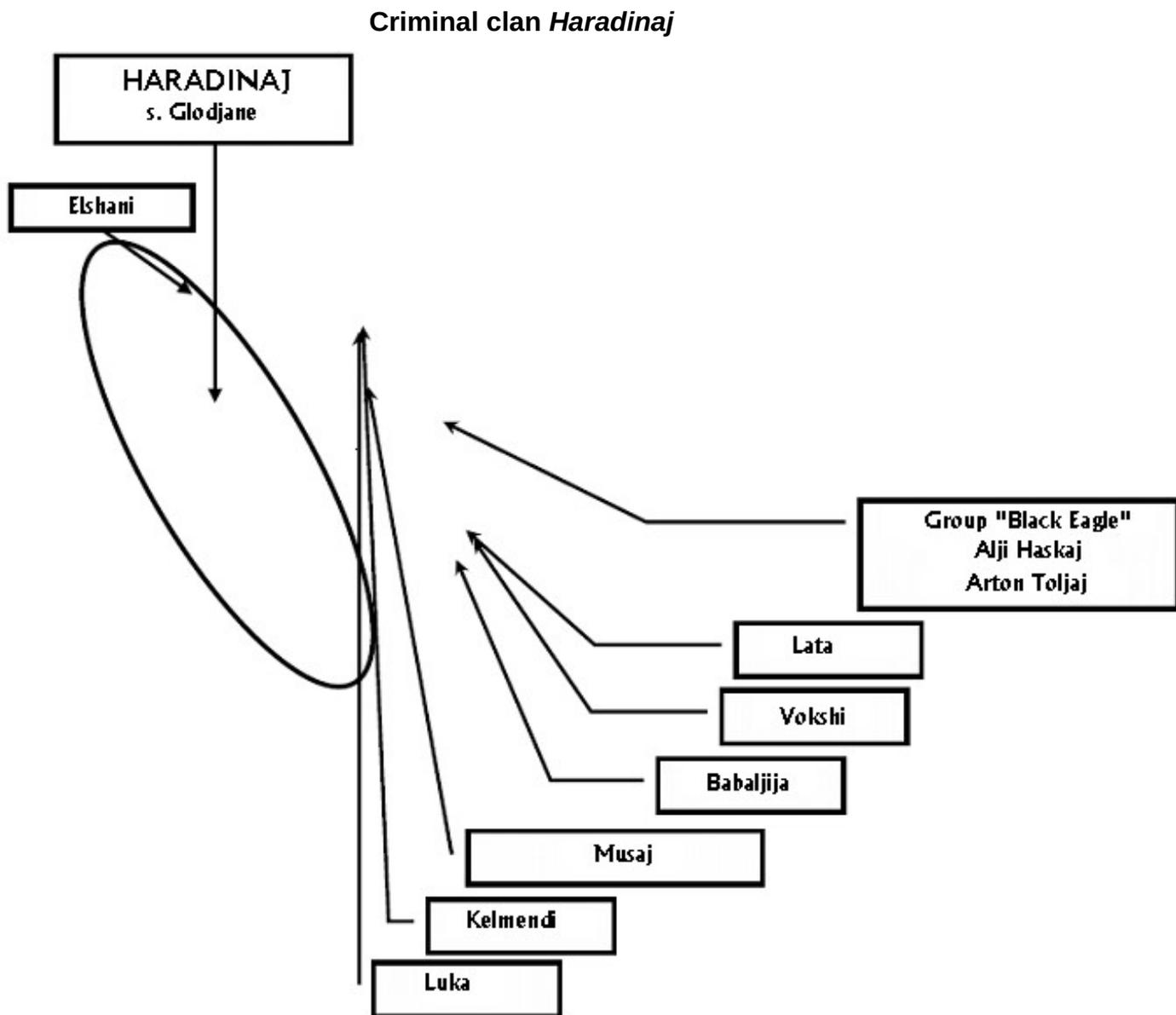
The illegal drug trade, carried out on the K&M territory, grew as a part of the overall growth of the Balkan drug trafficking operations. This was a result of the lack of strong government institutions (the police and the judiciary) that would stop the infiltration and cut the drug routes, the existence of a legal vacuum created in the period between the arrival of the multinational forces and the establishment of a new legal system by the UNMIK administration, a control of the borders, rugged terrain and the poor economy that, all together, made the K&M an ideal place for the drug trade.

One of the channels through which drugs are transported from Turkey to Italy and then to Western Europe goes through Tropoja and the ports of Durachio and Valona in Albania. [37](#) Certain amounts of heroin and cocaine are processed in the Albanian laboratories and from there they are transported to the village of Lužane, then to Muhovac and Veliki Trnovac in the south of Serbia, and to Montenegro, that is, to Tuzi and Ulcinj, whence they are distributed all over Europe. Unprocessed drugs from Albania end up in the region around Gnjilane and Prizren where there are two large laboratories for the production of so-called hard drugs (Map 9).

The transfer of drugs is conducted over the official border crossings such as Djeneral

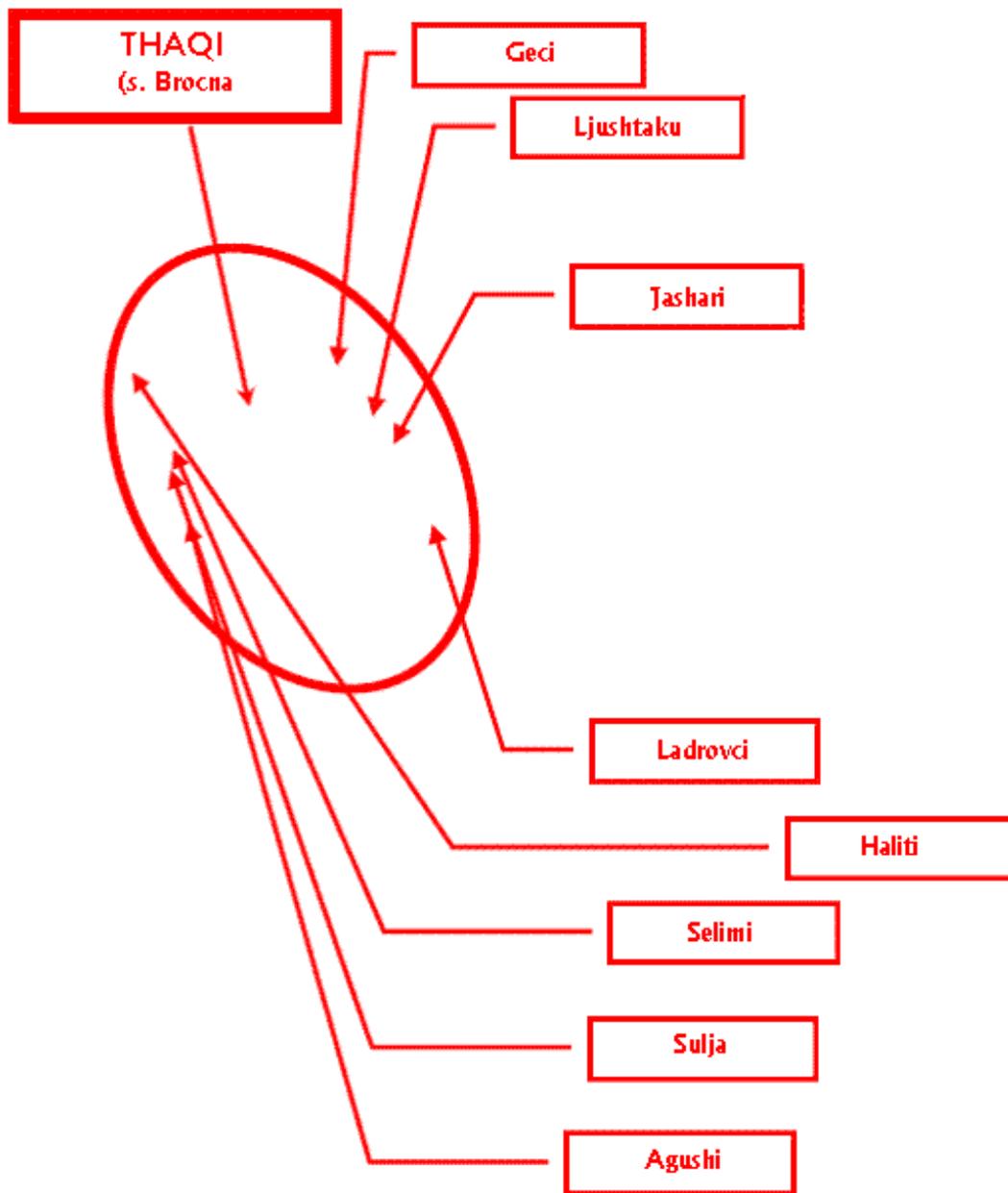
Janković, Jazinec, Qafa Prushit, Morina and Tropoja, thanks to the cooperation between the criminal groups and the customs officials, and the members of KPC and KPS. The arms which come from Albania are usually sold on the black markets in Junik and Djakovica. [38](#)

Because of the geographical links between the regions of Kosovska Mitrovica and Peć with Serbia and Montenegro this area represents the main transit route for illegal trafficking in cigarettes. One of the frequently used routes for this activity follows the line: Northern Kosovska Mitrovica - the village of Brnjak, Zubin Potok municipality - lake Tabalije - the village of Starčevać - Ribarići - Novi Pazar - Kraljevo - Kragujevac - Trstenik. [39](#)



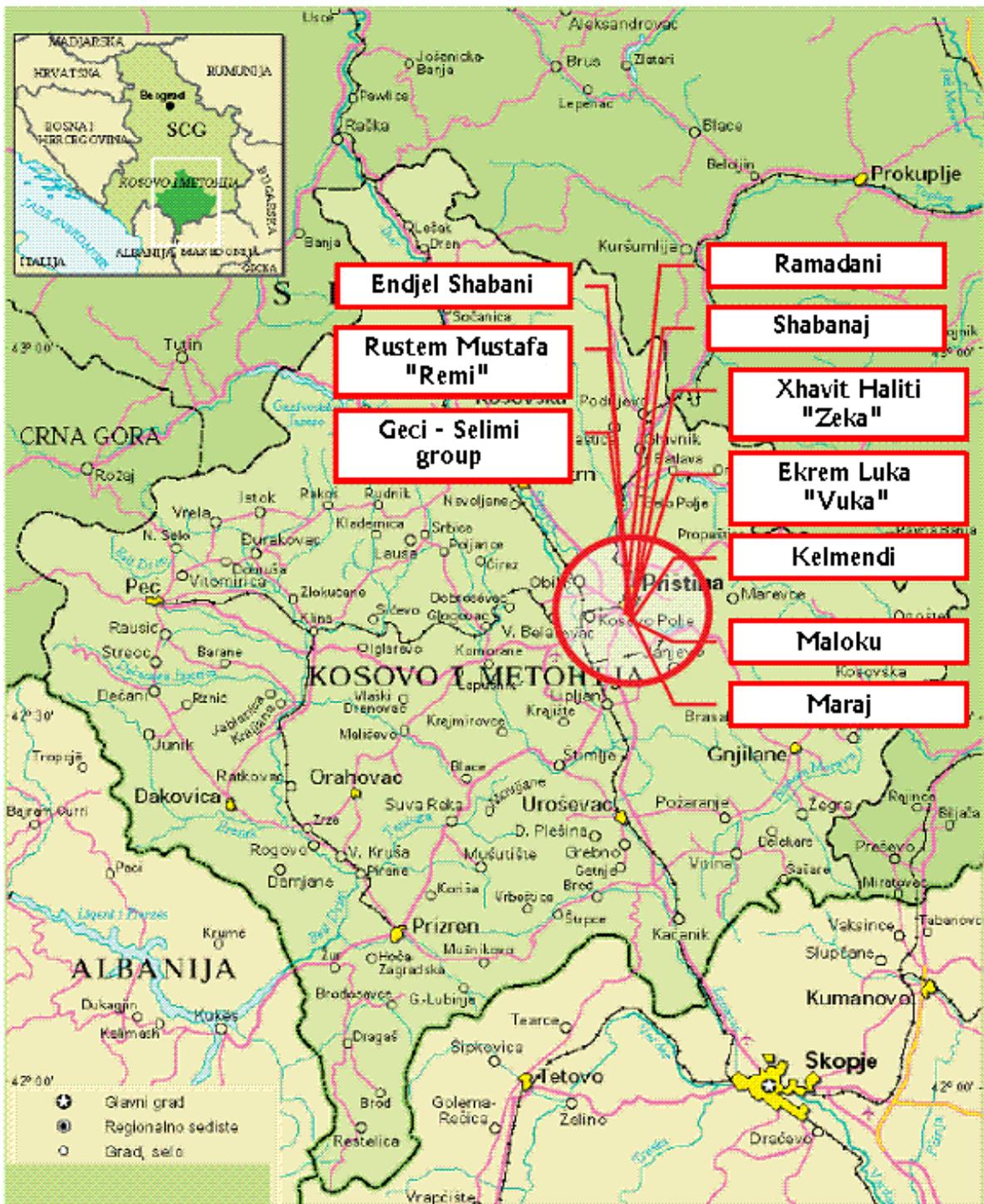
Map 6.

Criminal clan *Drenica Valley*



Map 7

Criminal groups and individuals in Priština





Map 8.

Drug routes through Kosova and Metohije





Legend:

- heroin
- marihuana
- cocaine

Map 9

Map 10.

“Alternative route” drug trade



Afghanistan
Pakistan

Map 11.

Human trafficking



Map 12.

- Activities of the Albanian mafia around the world

Up to the beginning of the armed conflicts in former Yugoslavia, most of the European market and a smaller part of the USA market have been supplied with narcotics smuggled via the so-called Balkan route. From the countries of origin (Pakistan, Iran, Afghanistan) and Turkey, where the raw materials for the narcotics were processed, this road led through Greece, Bulgaria, former Yugoslav republics (Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia), Romania, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, all the way to the final destinations in Austria, Germany, Italy, Switzerland and other Western European countries (Map [10](#)).

When fighting erupted in this area, Albanian mafia created new routes for the drug trafficking towards Western Europe, avoiding the conflict regions. In that way, two new, alternative routes were created: the southern one going from Turkey, through Bulgaria, FYROM, K&M and Albania to Italy and other Western European countries. [40](#) The second, the northern one, goes from Turkey, through Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary to the Czech Republic, Slovakia and the Western European nations. [41](#) (Map [11](#))

When the conflicts in Yugoslavia ended, the old Balkan route was re-established all over again, but the new channels for smuggling the drugs did not disappear and the smuggling network was greatly expanded. All American agencies fighting against the drug trade estimate that, along with the Turkish, the criminal groups of the Kosovo Albanians are the most important drug smugglers in Europe. [42](#) These groups have been described by experts as extremely violent and involved, also, in the international arms trade, with more and more substantial evidence of their criminal activity in the USA.

The fact that as early as the mid-80s members of the criminal groups were highly organized and represented a serious threats to the representatives of the judiciary who were prosecuting them testifies to the strength of the Albanian mafia in the USA. At that time the American police stated that the members of the Albanian mafia were involved in all kinds of criminal activities (extortions, robberies, arms trafficking, shootings, running of illegal gambling operations in certain parts of New York etc.)

The main criminal activity of the Albanians in the USA was drug trafficking, and the American experts for fighting this type of crime had even then issued a warning that, in only a few years, these criminal groups could take over 25% to 40% of American heroin market.

From the mid-90s, Albanian criminals from the USA were helping the activities of KLA in K&M by raising funds to purchase the weapons needed by this terrorist organization. At first, the fundraising was conducted secretly and later a branch of the *Fatherland Calls* (Zeri e atdheut) fund was also established in the USA to channel financial support to the members of KLA through the bank accounts in the USA and Canada and many other Western European countries. In addition, money was being transferred directly through emigrants - couriers, who came to K&M.

Together with the collection of the money, Albanian emigrants in the USA organized shipments of humanitarian aid and weapons and sent volunteers to joined the units of KLA in K&M. [43](#)

American intelligence sources warned of the possibility of the "Columbian Syndrome" developing in the Balkans which means that the Albanian mafia could become strong enough to take over the control of one or more areas in which the Albanian population is predominant. At the time it was noted that, in the political arena, the effect was already accomplished by directing the profits from the narco-terrorism to the local governments and political parties. The Democratic Party of Albania (DPA - PDSH), in power at the time, was suspected of tolerating and directly profiting from the drug trade and financing secessionist political parties and other groups in K&M and Macedonia.

The Party for Democratic Prosperity (PDP - PPD) and other Albanian parties from FYROM, such as the ultra nationalist National Democratic Party (NDP - PKD), together with the Albanian parties from K&M have been accused of using "laundered" money generated through narco-terrorism. In all three cases, money made through crime was often disguised as emigrant donations, with the estimate that the profit from narco terrorism directed to the south of the Balkans in 1993 had reached the sum of 1 billion dollars. The same sources claimed that, in addition to the purchase of mafia "protection," this money was being used for achieving popularity among the people, through alleged patriotism, but also for other criminal activities, above all for the purchase of guns.

On the continent of Europe, the Albanians from K&M hold more than 80% of the heroine trade, their dealers are located in at least half the European countries and they smuggle 4 to 6 tons of heroin monthly amounting to two billion US dollars a year. The Interpol data show that in 1999 the Albanian mafia earned 38 million dollars from the drug trade, in 2001 fifty and in 2002 seventy million US dollars. The Interpol statistics also shows that during 1997 out of all arrested heroin smugglers, Albanians accounted for 14%, but that the average amount of heroin found on non-Albanian dealers was 2 grams, while the Albanians were found in the possession of 120 grams on the average. [44](#)

Profits of the Albanian drug lords reach the amount of one billion USD, with the turnover in K&M amounting to USD 125 to 150 million, of which KPC receives USD 25 million. Hashim Thaqi receives USD 5 million as his share. Out of the total amount of drugs that enter the global market, as much as 65% crosses the K&M territory, while 90% of the heroin distributed in the European market is smuggled through this region.

The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) recognized Albanians in K&M as the second most important drug traffickers in the world market.

The French Geopolitical Drug Observatory published a report containing evidence that the Albanian drug lords were crucial players in the widespread operations called "drugs for weapons," while several Albanian dealers arrested in Western Europe confessed to have procured the arms for KLA in K&M. [45](#) This kind of trade was also confirmed by the European Union, at the meeting held in 1994 in Brussels.

German anti-drug agents underline the fact that Albanians have organized one of the largest organizations for drug trafficking in Europe and that the profits generated by the illicit trade are laundered in 200 private banks and exchange offices. Representatives of the Italian police state that the Albanian mafia in the country, due to their violence and numerous membership, has managed to suppress Turkish drug traffickers and become a partner to several Italian mafia organizations, including Cosa Nostra, Camora di Napoli, Ndrangheta di Calabria and Sacra Corona Unita in the region of Puglia. Besides, the Albanian traffickers have soon progressed from the status of couriers to that of the organizers of contraband networks who, in their turn, now hire couriers from the ranks of criminals of other nationalities.

The seat of activities of Albanian drug lords is in Calabria, Italy, while Milan is the main business center. The major lords of these organizations invest their illegally acquired assets into beauty parlor chains and shops not only in Italy, but also in Great Britain and other Western European countries.

In addition to the drug trafficking, Albanian criminals in Italy are also involved in prostitution, racketeering, widely spread arms deals, as well as in the organization of begging and pick pocketing for which, with permanent abuse and intimidation, they use the children purchased from their parents in Albania at the price of USD 1,000 per child.

In the Ticino canton, on the border between Italy and Switzerland, it is the Albanians who are in total control of the smuggling of drugs and people. In 1995, some 2,000 Albanians

charged with drug trafficking were incarcerated in the Swiss penitentiary institutions. According to the reports of the Swiss police, the proceeds of the illicit trade were used for the procurement of *Kalashnikovs* (AK-47) and *Uzis* (Israeli manufactured sub-machine guns) in Bern and Berlin.

In March 1992, a representative of the Swedish Police Intelligence Service confirmed that this Service believes there are connections between drug trafficking and KLA. Based on an analysis conducted in 1998 by officials of the Swedish and Norwegian Security Forces in relation to the heroin seized in the last two years, it was evident that Albanians accounted for 80% of the drugs traded, with the proceeds used for the procurement of arms for KLA. In 1999 the Police in Bratislava and Budapest discovered warehouses for thousands of kilos of heroin. Besides, larger quantities of pure cocaine were also seized by the police from the Albanian traffickers.

In June 1998 over 50 Albanians from K&M were arrested in Spain, involved in almost 1,000 robberies and laundering operations for the money obtained from robberies on the territory of Germany. Several days later, a group of 70 Albanians was also arrested under suspicion of drug trafficking, money laundering, robberies and possession of forged documents.

In 1998, a Greek representative in Interpol filed a report stating that Albanians from K&M represented the main source of cocaine and heroin supply in illegal markets of the world. Besides, in the course of 2000, Interpol received information suggesting that in FYROM, along the FYROM-Greek border, synthetic drugs were manufactured, while in Albania cannabis was produced for the Greek market, with the Albanian criminals collaborating with the Greek ones in the organization of the drug shipment to Greece. In a joint action of Italian and FYROM police, conducted in 1993 and 1994, a group of drug dealers was discovered in Skopje, when 42 kg of pure heroin was seized. Also, it was stressed that this amount was only a small part of the total quantity of heroin that Albanian smugglers ship via FYROM.

In 2002, representatives of the Czech security forces announced that Albanian organized crime had started their activities in the drug trade and trafficking in human beings in this country in the early 90's. According to their reports, Albanians from K&M were quick to establish contacts with the local politicians, civil servants and police officials who, because of their meager wages, were easily corrupted and provided them with the working and permanent residence permits. Besides, Albanians started purchasing real estate along the borders with Austria and Germany and establishing catering facilities some of which were later transformed into brothels and also used, during armed conflicts in K&M, as transit points for smuggling arms and ammunitions for KLA.

In 1995, representatives of the Czech police in Prague stated that the Albanians had managed to make the Czech Republic one of the target destinations for heroin trade and to flood the country with the drug. In March 1999, the Czech police arrested one of the drug lords, Prince Dobroshi, who appeared to have been present at the celebration organized in Prague on the occasion of an outstanding award presented to Ibrahim Rugova. The search of Dobroshi's apartment resulted in the discovery of papers confirming the procurement of the arms for KLA.

In the trafficking in human beings, Albanians have a complete control over the transfer via the Balkans to Greece, using the same routes used for drug trafficking into the country. Albanian mafia has established strong connections with Turkish, African and Italian criminals for all operations related to illegal immigrants who are occasionally used as couriers for drug transport. In addition to the Albanian nationals and the Albanians from K&M, migrants from Turkey, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, China and other countries are recruited for the purpose. [46](#)

Albanian groups are mainly responsible for the shipment of illegal immigrants from the Albanian coast, across the Adriatic Sea, to Italy. They usually set off in Vljoza, or from Durs or even Ulcinj, in the south of Montenegro. In 1999 as many as 10,000 persons were smuggled into the EU countries via Albania. Smuggling illegal migrants is an important source of revenue for Albanian criminal groups, although it cannot be compared with the drug trafficking which, it is believed, earned them USD 50 million in 1999. [47](#)

At any moment about 4 million illegal immigrants are on the move. On a global scale, the 1999 earnings of individuals and the trafficking networks was estimated at USD 3 - 10 billion. Interpol has unequivocal indications on the involvement of organized crime in each segment of the travel of illegal migrants. Recently, Albanians have revived the trade in stolen cars and have re-established the networks for their transport from Italy, Switzerland, Germany, the Czech Republic and Poland to K&M, whence some of them are sent further.

According to Interpol reports, trafficking in women and enforced prostitution have become important for the Albanian mafia in 1999 when thousands of women left K&M and went to Albania because of armed conflicts in the region. The Albanian prostitution networks increasingly involve women of other nationalities, such as women from Romania, Moldova, the Russian Federation, Bosnia and Herzegovina and other countries. The pimps usually state that they originate from K&M in order to obtain the status of political refugees although actually most of them come from Albania and not from K&M. Some Albanians control these operations from abroad, where Belgium is the seat of some of the bosses of this activity (Map [12](#)).

Representatives of the Council of Europe believe that the rise of prostitution in K&M resulted, among other things, from the presence of a large number of international troops and civilians in the region. According to the reports of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), thousands of women and girls from Eastern Europe are taken by force and brought to K&M for sexual exploitation and forced prostitution. Besides, trafficking in women takes place within K&M as well as from it.

- Influence of criminal factors from the Republic of Albania

Albania is the largest money laundering and drug trafficking center in the Balkans. The proceeds generated from the drug trade were channeled through the pyramidal savings schemes, the breakdown of which led to the drastic political unrest in that country in 1997. The ensuing anarchy in the country made it possible for the Albanian drug mafia to develop their operations to an unprecedented level.

The link of terrorism and organized crime in K&M was established under the strong influence of certain political factors in the Republic of Albania, suspected of corruption and connections with criminal organizations. It is important not to overlook the fact that KLA expansion coincided with the rule of Sali Berisha who is believed to be "tolerant" to drug trafficking, more so since DPA maintains close links with Hashim Thaqi even now.

Groups dealing in organized crime in the Republic of Albania have a significant influence on the decisions made by the government and by political parties. In the town of Skadar and its surroundings, paramilitary organizations of Albanian drug lords and arms dealers have better and more modern equipment than the Albanian Army. Mafia groups frequently assist individuals to get to power, but once they are at the position of power, they have to "pay the debt," so that mafia groups can control operations of the governmental bodies, primarily the police, in order to maintain their privileged status.

In addition to the strongest and most dangerous mafia clan known as Kula, which controls a part of the drug trade from Turkey and deals with trafficking in arms and illegal immigrants to Italy, the Abazi family is also engaged in the trafficking in drugs and arms,

while the Borici clan works together with the Italian criminal gangs engaged in illegal drug trade and in prostitution. The Brokaj group, engaged in drug and arms trafficking, as well as in prostitution, is particularly interesting since its membership is composed of former Sigurimi Secret Service officials.

In this region several other organized groups are active, like: Halkaj, Kerkiku, Caushi, Shehu, Kakami and Hasani.

Although the former communist regime in the Republic of Albania had also expressed territorial pretensions, primarily toward the territory of K&M, the military activities of KLA are openly supported by the Tirana government. During that period, Albania was a logistics base for terrorists from K&M, as well as a busy transit region for trafficking in arms, drugs and excise goods. During the civil unrest in Albania in 1997, a large number of arms and ammunition was taken out of the arsenals of the Albanian Army and shipped, for the largest part, to FYROM and K&M. [48](#) The weapons originating from Albania were usually sold at very low prices, at the black market of Junik and Djakovica. Because of the easy accessibility of these weapons to the general public, additional favorable conditions were created for both the escalation of terrorism in this region and the development of all forms of crime, including organized crime. [49](#)

After the termination of armed conflicts in K&M, as suggested by the officials of the Albanian Ministry of the Interior, the most wanted criminals in their country went to the territory of K&M in order to avoid arrest. Accordingly, a large number of crimes perpetrated on the territory of K&M may be attributed to the nationals of the Republic of Albania who are frequently in conflict with the criminal gangs of K&M Albanians.

The conflict in Kosovo and Metohija and the problems with the refugees in Albania, resulted in a large inflow of financial aid from the West. Albanian organized crime, with their connections with the official regime in Albania, greatly profited from these sources estimated at about USD 163 million.

5. The Role of Albanian Emigration

Albanian emigration in Switzerland, Germany, Belgium, Holland and the USA operated via a number of illegal organizations of extremists recruiting Albanians and sending them to K&M to join KLA, while some of them organized, on the territory of their respective countries, the centers for military and terrorist training of already recruited troops. Albanian emigration in Switzerland, particularly the leading members of former KLA and NKM, sponsored new activities of terrorist in the south of Serbia and in FYROM.

Activities of Albanian emigration consists of collecting of the large amounts of financial means necessary for the procurement of arms and equipment to the terrorist groups. The money is collected in an organized manner, by direct contributions, or by payments for alleged humanitarian needs of the Albanian population. [50](#) The deposited amounts are transferred, via selected banks or illegal channels, to Albania and K&M and, in some cases, the money is carried by "couriers" which is described as the "home visit." In the said countries, the members of Albanian emigration were exposed to torture by the members of Albanian mafia to ensure enforced collaboration and, in this way, support to terrorism in K&M, the south of Serbia and in FYROM.

Interpol reports suggest that a certain number of persons granted the status of refugees from K&M in Western Europe or North America, were very carefully selected by the Albanian mafia and directed to stay in the host country ready to become, at some future date, the links with criminal activities. The power of Albanian mafia is based on the obedience of the clans (*fis*). A group of clans, up to 20, makes a mafia line, headed by a political leader. Albanian mafia is not a pyramid with a *godfather* at the top, but a series of

pyramids with several *godfathers*.

Through the said humanitarian funds, the influential and financially powerful Albanian mafia clans launder the money generated from drug trafficking and other methods and activities of the mafia (blackmail, racketeering, extortion). According to the Interpol data, KLA and other Albanian groups use a sophisticated network of accounts and companies to forward the money where necessary. In 1998 Germany froze two bank accounts belonging to the *United Kosovo* organization after they had discovered that an Albanian from K&M, convicted for drug trafficking, deposited several hundreds of thousands of US dollars to the account.

The best known institution for organized collection of money for the procurement of arms and equipment for the terrorists in K&M is the *Fatherland Calls* fund founded in December 1993. It was registered in Germany, within the Albanian Democratic Community. Leaders of NKM and later of KLA were among the founding fathers. The fund has branches in 12 European countries and in the USA. The collected assets were used partly for training, equipment, arms and hiring of foreign mercenaries for KLA and partly for propaganda and hiring of lobbyists and influential groups in the Western ruling circles. [51](#)

In 1998, the obvious links of the activities of the Fund with the sale of arms in K&M made the governments of certain Western countries pass a decision putting a temporary ban on its operation. Analytical investigations suggest that Albanians in the diaspora transfer between USD 150 and 400 million to K&M through this fund, as voluntary contributions, illegal income tax and the proceeds from the drug deals. In an effort to collect as much financial assets as possible from the Albanians in the diaspora, FNUA opened branches of the Albanian National Fund in most Western European cities, which fact pointed to their ambition to set up an Albanian Bank of international reputation which would make it possible for the capital of Albanian mafia to enter the regular financial transactions.

The role of the Albanian lobby is of enormous importance for Albanian terrorists since their emigration is composed of 1.8 million Albanians worldwide. [52](#) Rich and influential Albanians in the USA and Western European countries tried, in addition to providing them with financial support, to present KLA as a national movement, presenting their terrorist activities as liberation struggle of the Albanian people in K&M, which they succeeded to a substantial degree. In this respect, they made a stronghold with some western politicians and diplomats.

6. Pan-Islamic Factor

The presence of the radical Islamic factor on the territory of K&M has been confirmed by an active participation of mujahedins in the armed conflicts in Kosovo and Metohija within KLA formations, as well as by the activities of various Islamic humanitarian organizations.

At the 16th Islamic Conference held in Pakistan, in October 1998, Albanian separatism in K&M was defined as jihad and the Islamic world was called to help with all available means this "fight for freedom on the occupied Muslim territories." Referring to jihad, the terrorist organization of Osama Bin Laden announced terrorist attacks against the "infidels." i.e. Great Britain, the USA, France, Israel, Russia, India and Serbia.

The presence of the radical Islam in K&M is illustrated by the fact that in 1995 Osama Bin Laden visited Albania as a guest of Sali Berisha, who was the President of Albania at the time, when bases for the logistic and financial support to the Al Khaida organization were set up, with cells in K&M. In addition to Bin Laden, the meeting was attended by Bashkim Gazideda, former head of secret police of Albania, Hashim Thaqi and Ramush Haradinaj. On the occasion, Bashkim Gazideda was elected into a group of Al Khaida leaders for the region of Balkan. [53](#)

Senator Pat Roberts, chairman of the Senate Security Commission, stated that the USA had evidence on the connections of KLA with Osama Bin Laden, as well as on the involvement of KLA members in illicit drug trade.

Intelligence circles in Albania confirm a strong presence of Bin Laden's network in this country, as well as the existence of their plans for attack on American citizens and facilities. The same sources have confirmed the presence of four groups of "Jihad Warriors" (from Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Tunisia and the Sudan) in Northern Albania and the participation of their members in the conflicts in K&M, as parts of KLA forces. [54](#)

Fanatic Islamic fighters from Afghanistan, Algeria, Egypt, Chechnya, Iran and other countries were included into the command structures of KLA in K&M. In some instances, these radically oriented and highly professionally trained persons set up their independent units for special operations and tactical assignments. They participated directly in the taking of the territories and the cleaning-up operations, in kidnapping civilians and members of the police forces, in brutal tortures and murders. They were also hired as trainers for special training of some KLA formations.

In 1998, the State Department placed KLA on the list of terrorist organizations, substantiating it with the facts that KLA operations were sponsored by the proceeds of international drug sale and the loans from Islamic countries and individuals, among whom, apparently, was Osama Bin Laden himself. According to the information supplied by Interpol, another link with Bin Laden is the fact that Muhammed Al Zawahiri, a brother of Dr Yaman Al Zawahiri, the leader of the organization of Egyptian Jihad and an ideologist of Al Khaida, was the leader of an elite KLA unit in the conflict in K&M. [55](#)

In the region of Drenica, within KLA forces, in the period May through late June 1998, a combined unit of mujahedins, called *Abu Bekir Sidik* was operating, under the command of Ekrem Avdi of Kosovska Mitrovica. Activities of the *Abu Bekir Sidik* unit, that is, the procurement and illegal supply of arms were funded by organizations from Zenica (B&H) called *Islamic Balkan Center* and *Active Islamic Youth* (AIY). [56](#) The unit was comprised of 115 mujahedins, of whom about 40 were foreign nationals (10 from Saudi Arabia two from Egypt, 4 from Albania, 2 from England and one from Ireland, Scotland each, while the rest were the citizens of FYROM and B&H). [57](#) A large number of fighters in the *Abu Bekir Sadik* of Albanian ethnic background returned to their places of residence in K&M after the unit was disbanded, while some tried to enter the territory of Albania.

On the occasion, in August 1998, the Security Forces of the Republic of Albania arrested Ekrem Avdija, Shpend Kopriva and Nexhmedin Laush and, subsequently, other members of the unit as well. Because of their terrorist activities, they were sentenced to long-term imprisonment, but in 2001, the whole group was pardoned under the pressure of international community. Soon after his release from prison, Ekrem Avdija continued to lead the organization named *Kosovo Islamic Bureau* that has, over a period of time, expanded the scope of its activities by setting up numerous branches in all larger towns of Kosovo and Metohija. Soon after that, he re-activated a group of mujahedins under the same name, *Abu Bekir Sidik*, with the seat in the southern part of Kosovska Mitrovica.

In addition to all this, the activities of NLA in Macedonia were supported by direct participation of about 150 mujahedins from Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Turkey, as well as from Albania, FYROM and K&M who had previously lived in some other Arabian countries where they had been trained. The substantiating data were obtained at the time of the arrest of Sedula Morati, a member of the *Ismet Jashari* unit that operated in the regions of Kumanovo and Lipkovo. The transfer of the mujahedins to the territory of Macedonia was organized by Daut Haradinaj, in addition to others. [58](#)

Under the pretext of humanitarian activities, the *Albanian-Haramain* organization with the seat in Prizren transports weapons illegally, participates in the training and sponsoring terrorists and provides logistic support to Albanian extremists in K&M and FYROM. Most of the funds used to sponsor this organization come from Saudi Arabia

The United Saudi Aid for Kosovo is an organization that provides arms for ANA membership. Eleven members of this organization were arrested by KFOR because of their connections with the international terrorist organization known as Al Khaida. *The Global Relief Foundation* is a nongovernmental organization with the fund of about one million US dollars, sponsored by Islamic countries. The head of the K&M office and two other activists were arrested by KFOR under suspicion of terrorist activities. [59](#)

Some representatives of the humanitarian organization *El-Yila* represent the main link between Islamic countries and terrorist in the south Serbia, K&M and FYROM and are engaged in the recruitment and transfer of terrorists to K&M and the south of Serbia.

Abu Muhamed and Yamel Lamprani, aka *Abu Musab*, who was, during the armed conflicts in Kosovo and Metohija, one of the trainers of *Abu Bekir Sidik* unit, are the respective heads of branches of the humanitarian organization *Igasa* in Skopje and Zagreb. Both of them used to study at the University of Belgrade and, in early nineties, were arrested as members of a religious terrorist organization named *Islamic Salvation Front*. This organization, in collaboration with the Islamic resistance movement called *Hamas*, i.e. the radical wing of the organization called *The Muslim Brothers* gathered students from the Sudan, Algiers, Palestine and Egypt.

The assignments and tasks that used to be carried out by a humanitarian organization known as *Islamic Relief* were taken over by two Islamic organizations - *Humanitarian Islamic Foundation* of Saudi Arabia and *Bin Laden's Flowers*.[60](#) Over a longer time period, the *Islamic Relief* recruited Albanian children without parents for suicidal terrorist actions. The recruitment of children was carried out in the Lion Hotel in Uroševac situated close to the premises of the organization. After the USA attacked Iraq substantial fall of activities in the organization ensued." [61](#)

"It is hard to prove the existence of organized crime in Kosovo, and even harder not to see the evidence supporting it!"

(State Department Official)

"It is hard to anticipate further development of Albanian organized crime. Since it is a recent phenomenon, its stability cannot be estimated. Nevertheless, future threats are real, having in mind mercilessness and unscrupulousness characteristic of Albanian criminal groups, already existing international connections, professionalism of their activities, as well as strong connections established on the basis of their common, ethnic Albanian origins. Additionally, strong positions of the Albanian criminal groups in Kosovo and Metohija, Macedonia and Albania itself are definitely the subject of concern of international community, particularly when geopolitical instability of the region and the presence of the UN peace-keeping forces are kept in mind."

(Interpol)

Notes

1. Although the Albanian population of the municipality of Medveda is not a majority, the Albanian extremists

treat it as a part of the unitary ethnic area.

2. A terrorist organization founded in late 1999 which intensified armed activities in Macedonia, K&M and in the south of Serbia in 2002.

3. Thus, for example, the Gecaj, Kodra, Jashari and Selimi families dominate in Drenica, so that the largest number of KLA members in the region are the members of the said families.

4. Most members of the party are former members and supporters of KLA. It has been led, from the beginning, by Hashim Thaqi. It was founded on October 14th 1999 under the name of Party of Democratic Progress of Kosovo and was renamed on May 20th 2000 before the local elections in K&M.

5. Founded on May 2nd 2000 in order to satisfy political ambitions of Ramush Haradinaj, one of the main commanders of KLA.

6. "Whenever we arrest a gang leader, he wraps himself up into an Albanian flag and the streets become flooded with demonstrations. This is not a society affected by organized crime, but a society founded on organized crime," said Fletcher.

7. This paramilitary formation was set up with the intention of representing the core of independent armed forces of independent Kosovo. 8. The intelligence suggests that Xhavit Haliti, the current vice-president of the Kosovo Governments, one of KLA founders and key person in developments of its logistics was the murder organizer. Supporters of Ibrahim Rugova and Haliti are considered responsible for the murder of Tahir Zemaj, another AFRK commander, who was shot in early January 2003.

9. In comparison with all other political parties in K&M, NKM is the only one with the so-called political continuity, since it has grown out of the former leftist illegal organizations such as the Red Popular Front and Popular Front for the Republic of Kosovo, founded during the seventies and eighties. PMKL, however, was founded in 1993, as an illegal organization with the programmed objective to "fight against Serbian intruders." Now, both NKM and PMKL are legal parties with representatives in the Kosovo Parliament although they have never renounced their political radicalism, i.e., the support to the establishment of Greater Albania using all available methods and means.

10. It was possible to "buy out" membership in KLA units by paying two to five thousand German marks to the local KLA commander, allegedly for the needs of the organization, although substantial part of these resources ended up in private pockets.

11. On March 24th 1999 *The Times* published an article entitled "Drug Money related to Kosovo Rebels" by its correspondents from Bohn, Roger Boyes, and Eske Wright.

12. The formation was set up by the UN mission for K&M as "a service agency for emergency interventions." To fill the positions of 3,052 active duty and 2,000 reserve duty troops, 17,348 former KLA members and 2,923 civilians applied.

13. The Albanian leadership at the time tried to prejudice the role of KPC with the introduction of the adjective *mbrojtje* with twofold meaning: protective and defensive, which is the reason why the international representatives insist on the English term (Kosovo Protection Corps), which is not equivocal. to be trained and advanced professionally, has made it possible for the KPC to provide, through training and instructions, direct participation in the actions, personnel and logistic support to subsequently developed Albanian terrorist and already existing criminal organizations.

14. *The Halifax Herald Limited* of June 2nd 2003, by Scott Taylor.

15. In late January 2001, Bujanovac Internal Affairs Department pressed criminal charges for robbery and armed robbery against Lirim Jakupi, aka *Nazi*, a member of LAPMV for Bujanovac, for his violent behavior, robbery and blackmail of his well-off compatriots.

16. Among them also Shaqir Shaqiri, originally from Oraovica, near Preševo, who was at the time the deputy commander of the 6th regional KPC territorial group, while Junuz Musliu of Bujanovac was the logistics officer in the same zone. NLA activities in western Macedonia were organized by Daut Haradinaj who was the commander of the 3rd regional KPC territorial group in 2001.

17. Some high ranking officials of the Democratic Party of Albanians in Macedonia are among the participants in this chain.

18. In the heat of armed conflicts in the region of Bujanovac, from February through March 2001, Lirim Jakupi procured modern arms (automatic rifles, machine guns, anti-tank RPGs, so-called "nitroglycerin cannons" etc.) from Nuredin Lushtaku, commander of the 114th brigade (within the 2nd regional KPC territorial group) for this organization.

19. Transport of arms via K&M territory to the FYRepublic of Macedonia was organized by Mustafa Shaqiri,

aka commander Schpetim, who was the deputy commander of the General Staff.

20. The leadership consists of the same strategists of terrorist activities as those of LAPMB.

21. The same scenario and similar effects were seen in FYROM where, after demilitarization of NLA, the Ilirida Liberation Army was founded.

22. In the meantime, Rustem Mustafa was arrested by KFOR and by the decision of the International Panel of Judges of the Priština District Court sentenced to 17 years of imprisonment for the war crimes perpetrated in the region of Priština and Podujevo.

23. At the time of its foundation, the FNUA was called National Committee for the Liberation of Occupied Territories (NCLLOT). The name was changed in mid July 2002. ANS and ANF were founded in early 2003.

24. Isuf Sulaj, Hekuran Aslani, Idriz Smotaha, Spiro Butka and Genc Sefa who used to be high ranking officers in KLA are now top leaders of ANA.

25. Estimates of the number of ANA troops by various analyses range from several dozens to 2-3 thousand armed terrorists.

26. According to some estimates, almost complete reserve forces of KPC, some 2,000 troops, are included in ANA.

27. In mid 2003 the Western media reported that, from June 1999, most terrorist attacks were those of the Albanian extremists against the Serbs and members of other ethnic minorities. This has resulted in the expulsion of almost 240,000 people from K&M, while the representatives of the minorities who had remained in the Province were grouped and isolated in their enclaves.

28. KLA had DM 1.2 million at its disposal for the liquidations of DPK activists, RK Government and AFRK commanders. The *Eagles* group, with direct access to the Executive Command, was in charge of these activities. In addition to Ahmet Isufi and Tahir Zemaj, who headed AFRK, Enver Maloku, the head of DPK Information Center in Priština, Fehmi Agani, the DPK vice-president, Xhemal Mustafa, Information adviser to Ibrahim Rugova, Besim Dujaku, a member of Rugova's security service, Sali Çekaj the chairman of DPK German branch and a lot of other outstanding members in small towns were also killed.

29. In 2000, *International Police Review* published an article about the connection between organized crime and KLA in which it was stated that the members of KLA did not smuggle drugs, but were financially dependent on the people who did, which "provided the criminals with an opportunity to influence an army of 30,000 armed troops who are in control of the postwar Kosovo."

30. The funding of terrorist activities is also conducted through the Kosovo Fund (until 1999 known as the Fund of the Government of the Republic of Kosovo), located in Germany. The money for the fund was collected by a regular, often enforced 3% taxation imposed on the income of the Albanians working in West European countries and also by voluntary donations.

31. These data are revealed in the Council of Europe report on the situation in K&M, for the January to April 2000 period. The same statements have been made by Max Edelbacher, the chief of the Security Bureau from Vienna, after his visit to K&M in April 2000.

32. On April 30th 2000, the Scottish paper *Sunday Herald*, in an article headlined "Kosovo - where the police does not rule," cited an unidentified member of the military intelligence service from the Bondsteel base, who said that "the crime rate in Kosovo is the same as that in Los Angeles." The author of the article stated that this was an incredible fact because the population of K&M, numbering 2 million, is spread over the territory which is half the size of Scotland.

33. Some clans were obliged to pay the terrorist organization ANA monthly payments amounting to Euro 100,000 for "protection."

34. Some of the Musaj family members from the village of Streoce, in the Deëani municipality, were also members of AFRK.

35. The drug trafficking centers in Macedonia are Gostivar, Kumanovo and Skopje, where the local narcomafia rented a whole floor at the Grand Hotel and made it its headquarters.

36. The opinion of the UN intelligence office in Priština is that arms trade is as big threat to European security as is the heroin trade.

37. Beside the listed criminal activities, in K&M there is also a developed illegal trade in oil derivatives. According to the Priština paper *Koha Ditore*, which is printed in Albanian, some 100 tons of petrol are smuggled from Montenegro to K&M.

38. Using this route, the journey from the country of origin to the end-user takes 7 to 10 days.

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41. The Interpol data show that more than one ton of heroin and more than 10 tones of hashish are being seized every year on the southern and northern Balkan routes.
42. In Germany, for example, the Albanians have completely ousted the Turkish and the Kurdish drug dealers. In Slovakia and Hungary they control 90% of the drug trade, in Switzerland 70%, in Denmark 50%, and in France 40% of the market. There has been a growth in the shipments of narcotics to Albanian criminals in Greece, which are, as reported by the Greek police, six times larger than five years ago.
43. The *Atlantic* brigade was formed within KLA of the volunteers from the USA.
44. The information published in the National Post on April 13th 2000 where the author cited the Interpol Report.
45. The statement that Albanians from K&M exchange drugs for arms was substantiated in numerous affairs. In 1999 the Italian Court in Brindisi convicted an Albanian heroin dealer who confessed to having procured arms for KLA from the mafia in exchange for the drugs. Besides, an Albanian in the Czech Republic placed an order for light infantry weapons and rocket launchers. According to the sources in the Czech Police, the arms were intended for KLA.
46. The criminal bosses from the ranks of K&M Albanians provided false Yugoslav passports for some of Albanian nationals, in order to make it possible for them to seek asylum as political refugees from immigration authorities in some Western European countries.
47. Migrations are not only the source of income, they also play an important role in the establishment of networks in foreign countries, i.e. providing bridges with Albanian mafia abroad.
48. According to the Interpol sources, the data refer to about 38,000 pistols, 226,000 *Kalashnikovs* (machine guns), 25,000 automatic rifles, 2,400 anti-tank rocket launchers, 3,500,000 hand grenades, 3,600 tons of explosives. Although organized crime groups were not, probably, controlling the situation, Interpol experts have reasonable grounds to assume that they have profited greatly from this chaos, by acquiring large amounts of weapons. In their opinion, before the breakdown of the financial pyramids, the sum of about USD 500- 600 million was transferred to the accounts of Italian criminal organizations and their Albanian partners. Subsequently, the funds were re-invested in western countries.
49. Suggesting the importance of the fight against organized crime in Albanian, in June 2002, Joseph Limprecht, American Ambassador to Tirana, gave a statement to Radio Free Europe highlighting the necessity for closing down the channels for trafficking in drugs, arms, women and children, since they could be used by the terrorists.
50. At one time, all assets collected from the Albanian diaspora for the Tetovo University were re-directed to cover the needs of armed actions of the terrorists of NLA. French analysts believe that these funds also originate from drug trafficking.
51. A certain share of the fund was used for sponsoring parallel Albanian educational and medical services organized in order to boycott completely the operation of the official state organizations in K&M.
52. In the year 2000, it was estimated that the Albanian diaspora had the following distribution: 500,000 in Canada and the USA, 500,000 in Greece, 400,000 in Germany, 200,000 in Switzerland, 65,000 in Turkey, 40,000 in Sweden, 30,000 in Great Britain, 25,000 in Belgium, 20,000 in France.
53. On June 22nd 2001, referring to the statements of the leading representatives of the Macedonian Security Forces, *The Washington Times* published an article entitled "Bin Laden's Special Envoys" claiming that Osama Bin Laden was one of the major NLA sponsors, and that up to that periods he had disbursed USD 6-7 million for the needs of this organization. 54. Sunday Times, November 29th 1998.
55. A presentation before the USA Congress of Ralf Mutschke, the assistant director of Interpol Criminal intelligence Administration on December 13th 2000. The topic was: The risk of spreading of organized crime, drug trafficking and terrorism.
56. Abdulah Duhajman of Saudi Arabia is the founder and head of the *Islamic Balkan Center* in Zenica. The Center was founded after the nongovernmental organization named *World Bureau for Islamic Call* with the seat in Riyadh, sponsored by rich businessmen of Saudi Arabia. Activities of the *World Bureau for Islamic Call*, also founded by the same Abdulah Duhajman, are directed at the propaganda and jihad and the mobilization of Moslems for the jihad. In the course of armed conflicts in B&H, Duhajman was actively participating in the battles within the unit called *El-Mujahid*. He is in touch with an Islamic terrorist

organization named *Muslim Brothers*, and there are some indications of his collaboration with Osama Bin Laden (some, unconfirmed information suggest that Abdulah Duhajman may be an alias for Osama Bin Laden himself).

57. The *Abu Bekir Sidik* unit had automatic rifles of Yugoslav, Chinese and Russian manufacture; they also had weapons with sniper scopes, as well as 40mm grenade launchers, RPGs, light and heavy machine guns, hand grenades and other weapons.

58. The British *Sunday Times* cited Albanian intelligence sources stating that the Bin Laden's network was set up in Albania to make it possible for them to undertake actions in Europe. The service also estimates that some terrorists have already infiltrated selected European countries using illegal migration channels. Analysts also suggest that the region is important for Bin Laden and his followers because of the possibility to establish control over the oil pipelines that will link Bulgaria with Albanian ports. In this way, it would be possible for Bin Laden to control oil deliveries to the USA.

59. Early in 2001, the international nongovernmental organization *Amnesty International* announced that two Iraqi nationals, Ahmad Said and Abdul Ragiz, were arrested in one KFOR actions, on suspicion of being connected with international terrorist network of Al-Khaida. They were representatives of the humanitarian organization known as *Global Relief Foundation*. Speaking about this, George Robertson, Secretary General of NATO, said that "the infiltration of Islamic terrorism is usually carried out through Islamic humanitarian organizations."

60. This is a newly founded, illegal organization where even the name itself suggests terrorist activities.

61. In March 2000, BBC reported that KFOR had searched the premises and offices of *Islamic relief*, since American officials informed them that the organization might be linked with Bin Laden. The organization decisively rejected such accusations.