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**Kosovo** Media Highlights

**Thaci believes 110 MPs would vote creation of army (*Epoka e Re*)**

The President of Kosovo, Hashim Thaci, reiterated on Friday during a lecture for the students of UBT College in Pristina, that there is no turning back on the matter of the creation of Kosovo’s armed force. According to him, there will be a complete unification of political specter. “We had 109 signatures for the declaration of independence of Kosovo. I believe that we are going to have 110 MPs of Kosovo Assembly that will fully support creation of Kosovo’s army,” Thaci said.

**An army with 8000 soldiers (*Zeri*)**

The paper claims to poses a copy of the draft law which would transform Kosovo Security Force into armed forces. According to ***Zeri***, Kosovo’s army would have 8000 soldiers, from which 5000 would be active and 3000 reserve forces. The current allocated budget for the Ministry is € 51 million reports the paper, while additional € 5 million would be added each year. According to the draft law, the duty of the KSF army would be to defend the entire territory of Kosovo.

**Three Ministries say yes to KSF draft law (*Koha Ditore*)**

Based on the sources within the government of Kosovo, the paper reports that three ministries have already given the green light to the draft law which transforms the Kosovo Security Force into armed forces. “The opinions are positive. Only the KSF Ministry had some remarks related to technical aspects and proposed for them to be treated during the review of the draft law at the Assembly. The Ministry for European Integration gave its opinion that the draft law does not contradict the European Union legislation, while the Ministry of Finance concluded that there are no additional budgetary implications after the adoption of the draft law, therefore they gave the green light as well,” the source is quoted as saying.

**COMKFOR: Situation in Kosovo stabile, NATO to decide on KSF (*Lajmi*)**

KFOR Commander, Major General Giovanni Fungo, told *European Western Balkans* that KFOR remains vigilant and within its means and capabilities it continues to collaborate with the security institutions in Kosovo and the international Community to ensure that Kosovo has the proper means to deal with any security challenge.

“Overall, the role of KFOR has been and remains essential to help making Kosovo stable, democratic, multi-ethnic and peaceful,” Fungo said.

He added that KFOR carries out its activities in close cooperation and coordination with the United Nations (UN), the European Union (EU) and other international actors to support the development of a stable, democratic, multi-ethnic and peaceful Kosovo.

“NATO supports the development of the Kosovo Security Force within its current mandate. We will continue to help the development of the Kosovo Security Force – as a professional and multi-ethnic force – within its current mandate. Should the KSF’s mandate evolve, the North Atlantic Council will have to re-examine the level of NATOs commitment, particularly in terms of capacity-building,” said the KFOR Commander.

He also stressed that together with EULEX and the Kosovo Police, KFOR continues assisting the implementation of the agreements between Belgrade and Pristina and the Decani Monastery remains under direct KFOR protection. “We stand ready to respond to any threat that could be posed to the preservation of a  safe and secure environment,” he concluded.

https://europeanwesternbalkans.com/2017/03/17/ewb-interview-giovanni-fungo-kfor-commander-kfor-essential-for-kosovo-to-be-stable-democratic-multi-ethnic-peaceful/

**U.S. Embassy on the Law on Execution of Penal Sanctions (*U.S. Embassy, media*)**

Media report on the statement of the U.S. Embassy which notes that “The United States supports the passage of the Law on Execution of Penal Sanctions, which would close loopholes that allow politically-connected criminals to leave prison for frivolous reasons.  We are, however, strongly opposed to a proposed amendment to that law that provides each detainee will receive 36 hours of time served credit for every 24 hours of incarceration.  The amendment, as it stands, would entitle **EVERY** convicted criminal currently serving time in prison to a reduction of their prison sentence by 1/3.  It also means that a political body — the Assembly — is declaring wrong every independent judicial decision resulting in a term of imprisonment, and that every sentence of imprisonment in the future will be less than what the judge decides.  With the passage of this amendment, for example, the person sentenced to 23 years imprisonment for murder after stabbing his fiancée 76 times will serve only 15.  This amendment weakens the principle of legal certainty and judicial independence.  We urge the Assembly to reject that effort to weaken rule of law, and to move forward on legislation that would strengthen it.  The United States remains committed to strengthening the rule of law in Kosovo and to working together with Kosovo in that effort.”

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