

Main Stories 15 December 2018

* **Statement attributable to the Spokesman for the Secretary-General on Kosovo**
* **Statement by the Representative of Secretary General (*media*)**
* **Kosovo leaders: Army will serve to peace and stability of the region (*Epoka*)**
* **Pacolli’s message on the army addressed to the world countries (*RTK*)**
* **Kosovo’s Foreign Ministry responds to Maja Kocijancic (*media*)**
* **NATO to look into relation with KSF during its next meeting (*media*)**
* **Russia requests from KFOR to demilitarize and disband KSF (*Koha*)**
* **France recognizes Kosovo’s army (*media*)**
* **Serbian Army Chief of Staff: We are vigilantly monitoring situation in Kosovo (*RTK*)**
* **FYROM against creation of Kosovo’s army (*Zeri*)**
* **Bolton stresses the need for speedy agreement between Kosovo and Serbia (*Koha*)**
* **Haradinaj with a draft-book on issues to be discussed with Serbia (*Koha*)**
* **Assembly to gather for extraordinary session today at 14:00 hours (*Koha*)**
* **"Harshest condemnation of so-called Kosovo army" (Serbian Government, B92)**
* **Djuric: Illegal formation in Serbian territory, do not join it (B92)**
* **UN SC session on Monday, West seeking session “behind closed doors” (Tanjug, TASS)**

**Kosovo** Media Highlights

**Statement attributable to the Spokesman for the Secretary-General on Kosovo**

The Secretary-General has taken note with concern of the adoption by the Assembly of Kosovo of three draft laws aimed at strengthening the role and capacity of the Kosovo Security Force.

The Secretary-General underscores that Security Council resolution 1244 (1999) provides the sole legal framework for the international security presence, the Kosovo Force (KFOR), entrusted with the responsibility to ensure a safe and secure environment in Kosovo. Hence, any restriction to the discharge by KFOR of its security responsibilities would be inconsistent with that resolution.

The Secretary-General calls on all parties concerned to exercise restraint and refrain from actions that could raise tensions and cause a further setback in the European Union-facilitated dialogue for the normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina.

**Statement by the Representative of Secretary General (*media*)**

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of UNMIK, Zahir Tanin, notes the adoption of three laws by the Assembly of Kosovo that initiate substantial changes to the role and responsibilities of the Kosovo Security Force.

In this regard SRSG Tanin refers to UNSCR 1244 that entrusts the international security presence, namely the Kosovo Force (KFOR), with the responsibility to ensure a safe and secure environment in Kosovo. This resolution continues to provide the sole legal framework for the existing international security presence.

The SRSG encourages all parties to refrain from actions that could exacerbate tensions and to address all issues through political dialogue.

**Kosovo leaders: Army will serve to peace and stability of the region (*Epoka*)**

Endorsement of the legislation package which transforms the Kosovo Security Force (KSF) into a military force by the Kosovo Assembly MPs, was proceeded by a state ceremony organized by the Ministry of Security Force. Kosovo’s institutional leaders, leaders of the political parties, representatives of war associations and families of the martyrs participated at the ceremony, however, accredited ambassadors to Kosovo did not respond to the invitation, reports the paper. The President of Kosovo Hashim Thaci said during his speech that he has carried different positions during his carrier but being the Supreme Commander of the Kosovo Security Force is among those that honor and please him the most. “We thank our international partners, the U.S. and all NATO countries. We assure them that KSF will remain a multiethnic force which will serve every citizen of Kosovo, no matter their religion or ethnicity, and it will become factor of security and stability for Kosovo, region and further,” Thaci said. He added that KSF transformation will happen in cooperation with NATO and partners in the world, who wish sustainable peace in Kosovo and the region.

Assembly President Kadri Veseli said “we are members of a nation which never in history attacked anyone, never allowed hatred for others to prevail, never nurtured ideology that would affect the others, despite the fact of being victims of others’ ideologies.” He added that Kosovo’s future lies on integration in Euro-Atlantic structures.

The Prime Minister of Kosovo Ramush Haradinaj said Kosovo is the last one to align among the world armies. He added that Kosovo is joining this process in peace and it is honored to align with the U.S. “Align is the first word one learns when becoming a soldier,” Haradinaj said adding that Kosovo people aligned in all armies of the world but never in their own. “We were denied to have our alignment despite of being among the oldest nations in Europe. We are coming in peace,” he said. “We will not act for the army to turn against its population, not against Serbs, in north or in south, they belong to this country,” Haradinaj said.

**Pacolli’s message on the army addressed to the world countries (*RTK*)**

Deputy Prime Minister of Kosovo and Minister for Foreign Affairs Begjet Pacolli, informed many countries in the world about the transfer of Kosovo Security Force’s mandate into an army of Kosovo. Pacolli took to Facebook to inform Kosovo people that he had the honor and privilege to inform majority of World countries and institutions for the transition of KSF into a modern army as are many armies of the democratic world. “I also informed them that transition from Force into the Army is a careful, transparent and democratic process, beneficial not only for the Republic of Kosovo but for regional, European and global safety and stability.”

“There is a sole truth, the Army is a force of the Republic and citizens which reflects the constitutional and diverse character of the country. It has been and will be the same, and it will continue its close strategic cooperation with NATO, as an umbrella and stakeholder of the security in the region,” Pacolli wrote.

**Kosovo’s Foreign Ministry responds to Maja Kocijancic (*media*)**

EU Spokesperson Maja Kociajncic wrote on her Twitter account on Friday “The Kosovo Assembly adopted today legislation on the Kosovo Security Force. Like NATO, the European Union continues to share the view that the mandate of the KSF should be changed only through a comprehensive and gradual process in accordance with the Kosovo Constitution.” Media in Kosovo report about the reaction of Kosovo's Ministry for Foreign Affairs to Maja Kociajncic's tweet. "Dear Maja, the mandate of the KSF is stipulated by law, not Constitution. We suggest that European External Action Service carefully reads Kosovo Constitution," reads the Tweet.

**NATO to look into relation with KSF during its next meeting (*media*)**

KFOR spokesman Vincenzo Grasso said on Friday that NATO member countries will soon look into the Alliance’s new way of engagement in relation to the KSF.

"It will take time for a full army. In any case, KFOR stands here, it is responsible for guaranteeing a safe and secure environment and protection of all citizens in Kosovo,” Grazo told RTS.

He also reiterated the statement of the NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg that all member countries will meet to come up with a decision for NATO’s new engagement in Kosovo and its relation with Kosovo Security Force.

**Russia requests from KFOR to demilitarize and disband KSF (*Koha*)**

Russia's foreign ministry has denounced moves to form a Kosovo army and said it must be disbanded. The ministry says in a statement on Friday the NATO-led peacekeepers in Kosovo "must take urgent and exhaustive measures to demilitarize and disband any armed Kosovar-Albanian formations." Russia, a Serbian ally, has supported Belgrade in its rejection of Kosovo's independence declared in 2008. The Russian foreign ministry also denounced some Western officials who say that the new Kosovo army would be no different from the existing Kosovo Security Force. It says that "in reality, it doubles its numbers and creates reserves and most importantly substitutes the essence of the forces whose role until recently was that of civil defense."

**France recognizes Kosovo’s army (*media*)**

The French Embassy in Pristina issued a press release on Friday saying that France recognizes the adoption of laws for the Kosovo Security Force (KSF). “France wants agreements with KFOR about the presence of the KSF in the north to remain in force. It calls on Kosovo to resume dialogue with Serbia as soon as possible aimed at the full normalization of relations between the countries,” the press release noted.

**Serbian Army Chief of Staff: We are vigilantly monitoring situation in Kosovo (*RTK*)**

Serbian Army Chief of Staff, General Milan Mojsilovic, assessed that the situation in Kosovo after the formation of the Kosovo Army is unpredictable, but stated that the Serbian army is ready to respond to all challenges and threats and that citizens should not worry. "We will be vigilantly monitoring the overall situation in Kosovo," Mojsilovic told Radio Television of Serbia.

**FYROM against creation of Kosovo’s army (*Zeri*)**

Asked about his position on the Kosovo Army, the Prime Minister of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Zoran Zaev said that this was not the right time. "I know that this is also NATO's position, it is not the right time. We do not need new tensions. Once again, let's not forget that there is no intention for the Balkans to become source of fire again. I appeal to colleagues, prime ministers, heads of states to be careful in their steps because our common obligation as six Western Balkan countries, which aspire to join the EU, is to develop economic co-operation, increase of regional development, to ensure eternal peace, and to integrate into the European Union," Zaev said.

**Bolton stresses the need for speedy agreement between Kosovo and Serbia (*Koha*)**

The U.S. National Security Adivser John Bolton stressed the need for the reach of and agreement for normalization of the relations between Kosovo and Serbia as soon as it is possible.

“I welcomed Foreign Minister Miro Cerar of Slovenia to the White House today. As NATO Allies, we discussed our shared economic and security interests in Europe and the need for Serbia and Kosovo to reach an agreement as soon as possible. I much appreciated his insights,” Bolton wrote on his Twitter account.

**Haradinaj with a draft-book on issues to be discussed with Serbia (*Koha*)**

The Prime Minister of Kosovo Ramush Haradinaj said today that he will present on the next meeting of the government the most voluminous draft-book with chapters, which according to him presents strong institutional grounds for the reach of a comprehensive and legally binding agreement with Serbia. He added that he will submit the draft to the relevant factors in Kosovo in order for them to also give contribution in all issues presented.

**Assembly to gather for extraordinary session today at 14:00 hours (*Koha*)**

Based on the request of 42 MPs, the Assembly of Kosovo will gather today at 14:00 hours to discuss the resolution presented by PAN coalition and the social-Democratic Party. Kosovo Assembly President Kadri Veseli said Kosovo will show to to Serbia’s President that “we do not fear the dialogue.”

**"Harshest condemnation of so-called Kosovo army" (Serbian Government, B92)**

The Serbian Government has condemned in the harshest terms Pristina's decision leading to transformation of the Kosovo Security Force into a so-called Kosovo army.

This took place during Friday's session of the Serbian Government.

This decision of Pristina causes great concern and represents major violation of international law, first and foremost of UN Security Council Resolution 1244, the Government announced.

This decision is also contradictory with the so-called Constitution which the interim institutions of self-government in Pristina wrote and adopted on their own, which is an absurdity and proof that not only does Pristina not respect international agreements, but its own norms as well.

The Serbian Government will continue to point out to all international actors to a total disregard of international law by Pristina, which has been obvious ever since the signing of the Brussels Agreement in 2013, as Pristina has done absolutely nothing to implement it.

The violation of international law was demonstrated by a series of armed raids in the north of Kosovo-Metohija and the harassment of Serbs in the province, and then it escalated in early November when Pristina decided to introduce a tariff of 10 percent and subsequently of 100 percent on products from Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, thus violating directly and unequivocally the CEFTA Agreement and Agreement on Stabilization and Association.

The act of transformation of the Kosovo Security Force into a so-called Kosovo Army is just the latest drastic indicator of the extent to which unilateral moves of Pristina are in opposition to the basic values of democratic societies.

This is also the biggest threat to regional peace by Pristina so far.

The Serbian Government, together with the President of the Republic of Serbia, continuously follows the situation in our southern province and it will make all subsequent decisions in consultation and together with the President of the Republic of Serbia.

Serbia remains firmly committed to peace and stability in the whole region and all our activities will be directed at their preservation, the government concluded in a statement.

**Djuric: Illegal formation in Serbian territory, do not join it (B92)**

To Belgrade, the Kosovo army is an illegal occupying formation in the territory of Serbia, Marko Djuric said, addressing the public on Friday.

The director of the Office for Kosovo and Metohija also said that this so-called army is formed with the goal of changing the country's borders by force.

**UN SC session on Monday, West seeking session “behind closed doors” (Tanjug, TASS)**

Russian news agency TASS reports today that UN SC session on Kosovo is scheduled on Monday. The TASS, referring to diplomatic sources said the West requests session to be hold behind the closed doors, something that Russia is opposing.

The sources also said that Russia and Western countries did not manage to reach consensus over the format of the session, scheduled to take place on Monday and dedicated to Pristina’s decision to establish an army.

TASS added the chair of the SC Ivory Coast would continue consultations with involved parties on the format of the session until Monday.

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