

The Criminalization of the State: “Independent Kosovo”, a Territory under US-NATO Military Rule

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While the European Union and the US, have acknowledged that they would be “opposed” to a “ unilateral” declaration of independence of Kosovo, the secession of Kosovo from Serbia is already de facto. It is part of a US-NATO military agenda. It is the culmination of the 1999 NATO led invasion. It responds to US-NATO strategic objectives.

Moreover, the “compromise” Ahtisaari Proposal under the helm of the former Finnish Prime Minister to establish a “multi-ethnic” Kosovar State has little to do with “national sovereignty” or “independence”. It is a copy and paste replicate of the structures imposed on Bosnia-Herzegovina under the 1995 Dayton agreements. It essentially sustains the authority of the military occupation. Under proposed blueprint, all the major decisions pertaining to public spending, social programs, monetary and trading arrangements would remain in the hands of the NATO-UN occupation administration.

The re-election of a “pro-Western” president Boris Tadic in the Serbian elections is likely to “legitimize” Kosovo’s de facto secession. Boris Tadic’s Democratic Party takes its orders from Washington. In 2000, it actively participated in the ousting of Slobodan Milosevic from the Serbian presidency. Moreover, Boris Tadic as Serbian president, is also the Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces. He is unlikely to act without consulting Washington and Brussels in the event of a unilateral declaration of independence.

Since the 1999 NATO invasion, Kosovo has become a territory under foreign military rule. Kosovo remains under UN administration, In practice, however, it is under NATO military jurisdiction. Secession from Serbia would reinforce the control of the NATO-UN occupation authority.

The civilian government of the province is headed by Prime Minister, Hashim Thaci, former leader of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) (*Ushtria Çlirimtare e Kosovës* or *UÇK in Albanian*). Known for its extensive links to Albanian and European crime syndicates, the KLA was supported from the outset in the mid-1990s by the CIA and Germany’s intelligence agency, the Bundes Nachrichten Dienst (BND). In the course of the 1999 war, the KLA was supported directly by NATO.

Prime Minister of Kosovo Hashim Thaci, who now heads the Democratic Party of Kosovo was known in the 1990s to be part of a crime syndicate, involved in drug trafficking and prostitution. During the Clinton administration, he was a protégé of Madeleine Albright. In the 1990s, Thaci founded the so-called “Drenica-Group”, a criminal syndicate based in Kosovo, with links to the Albanian, Macedonian and Italian mafias. These links to criminal syndicates have been acknowledged both by Interpol and the US Congress.

In 1997, the KLA was recognized by the U.S. as a terrorist organization linked to the drug trade. President Clinton's special envoy to the Balkans, Robert Gelbard, described the KLA as, *"without any questions, a terrorist group"*.

The Democratic Party of Kosovo is integrated by former members of a terrorist organization. It has maintained its links to organized crime. In fact, a large part of the political spectrum in Kosovo is dominated by former KLA members. Kosovo's previous prime minister Ramush Haradinaj and head of the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo, elected in 2004, is also a former commander of the Kosovo Liberation Army. In addition to his links to organized crime, Hadadinaj was also indicted in 2005 for war crimes by the The Hague ICTY Tribunal.

The NATO occupation of Kosovo responds to US foreign policy objectives. It secures a heavily militarized US zone of influence in Southern Europe. It ensures the militarization of strategic pipeline routes and transport corridors which link Western Europe to the Black Sea. It also protects the multibillion dollar heroin trade, which uses Kosovo and Albania as transit locations for the transshipment of Afghan produced heroin into Western Europe.

Camp Bondsteel

Kosovo is home to one of America's largest military bases, Camp Bondsteel.

Bondsteel was built on contract to the Pentagon by Halliburton, through its engineering subsidiary Kellogg, Brown and Root (KBR). Camp Bondsteel is considered to be "the largest and most expensive army base since Vietnam." with more than 6000 US troops.

"Camp Bondsteel, the biggest "from scratch" foreign US military base since the Vietnam War (...) It is located close to vital oil pipelines and energy corridors presently under construction, such as the US sponsored Trans-Balkan oil pipeline. As a result defence contractors—in particular Halliburton Oil subsidiary Brown & Root Services—are making a fortune.

In June 1999, in the immediate aftermath of the bombing of Yugoslavia, US forces seized 1,000 acres of farmland in southeast Kosovo at Uresevic, near the Macedonian border, and began the construction of a camp.

Camp Bondsteel is known as the "grand dame" in a network of US bases running both sides of the border between Kosovo and Macedonia. In less than three years it has been transformed from an encampment of tents to a self sufficient, high tech base-camp housing nearly 7,000 troops—three quarters of all the US troops stationed in Kosovo.

There are 25 kilometres of roads and over 300 buildings at Camp Bondsteel, surrounded by 14 kilometres of earth and concrete barriers, 84 kilometres of concertina wire and 11 watch towers. It is so big that it has downtown, midtown and uptown districts, retail outlets, 24-hour sports halls, a chapel, library and the best-equipped hospital anywhere in Europe. At present there are 55 Black Hawk and Apache helicopters based at Bondsteel and although it has no aircraft landing strip the location was chosen for its capacity to expand. There are suggestions that it could replace the US airforce base at Aviano in Italy.

(See Paul Stuart, Camp Bondsteel and America's plans to control Caspian oil, WSWs.org, April 2002, <http://www.wsws.org/articles/2002/apr2002/oil-a29.shtml>)



Camp Bondsteel, 16 October 1999



Camp Bondsteel, Kosovo
March 2000



Camp Bondsteel was not the outgrowth of a humanitarian or “Just War” on behalf of Kosovar Albanians. The construction of Camp Bondsteel had been envisaged well in advance of the bombings and invasion of Kosovo in 1999.

The plans to build Camp Bondsteel under a lucrative multibillion dollar DoD contract with Halliburton’s Texas based subsidiary KBR were formulated while Dick Cheney was Halliburton’s CEO.

Construction of Camp Bondsteel was initiated shortly after the 1999 invasion under the Clinton administration. Construction was completed during the Bush administration, after Dick Cheney had resigned his position as Halliburton’s CEO:

The US and NATO had advanced plans to bomb Yugoslavia before 1999, and many European political leaders now believe that the US deliberately used the bombing of Yugoslavia to establish camp Bondsteel in Kosovo.. According to Colonel Robert L. McCure, “Engineering planning for operations in Kosovo began months before the first bomb was dropped.” (See Lenora Foerstel, Global Research, January 2008)

One of the objectives underlying Camp Bondsteel was to protect the Albanian-Macedonian-Bulgarian Oil pipeline project (AMBO), which was to channel Caspian sea oil from the Bulgarian Black Sea port of Burgas to the Adriatic.

Coincidentally, two years prior to the invasion, in 1997, a senior executive of `Brown & Root Energy, a subsidiary of Halliburton, Edward L. (Ted) Ferguson had been appointed to head

AMBO. The feasibility plans for the AMBO pipeline were also undertaken by Halliburton's engineering company, Kellogg, Brown & Root Ltd.

The AMBO agreement for the 917-km long oil pipeline from Burgas to Valona, Albania, was signed in 2004.

Criminalization of the State

The KLA was set up as a paramilitary group in the mid 1990s. It was a US-NATO sponsored insurgency. The objective was to destabilize and ultimately break up Yugoslavia. The KLA had extensive links to Al Qaeda, which was also involved in military training. Mujahideen mercenaries from a number of countries integrated the ranks of the KLA, which was involved in terrorist activities as well as political assassinations.

In this context, what are the implications of the "Ahtisaari Plan." which envisages the formation of a separate multi-ethnic Kosovar State?

The proposed Kosovar political setup is integrated by criminal elements. Western politicians are fully aware of the nature of the Kosovar political project, of which they are the architects. .

We are not, however, dealing with the usual links of individual Western politicians to criminal syndicates. The relationship is far more sophisticated. Both the EU and the US are using criminal organizations and criminalized political parties in Kosovo to reach their military and foreign policy goals. The latter in turn support the interests of the oil companies and defense contractors, not to mention the multibillion dollar heroin trade out of Afghanistan.

At the institutional level, the US administration, the EU, NATO and the UN are actually promoting the criminalization of the Kosovar State, which they control. In broad terms we are also dealing with the criminalization of US foreign policy. These criminal organizations and parties are created to ultimately serve US interests in Southern Europe.

Kosovo independence would formally transform Kosovo into an independent mafia state, controlled by the Western military alliance. The territory of Kosovo would remain under US-NATO military jurisdiction.

The 1999 NATO led Invasion of Kosovo

In 1999, many sectors of the Left both in North America and Western Europe were tacitly supportive of the NATO led invasion. Many progressive organizations upheld what they perceived as "a humanitarian war" on behalf Kosovar Albanians.

Media propaganda and disinformation contributed to distorting the real causes and consequences of the wars directed against the Yugoslav federation.

The anti-war movement was in disarray. At the height of the NATO bombings, several "progressive" writers described the KLA as a bona fide nationalist liberation army, committed to supporting the civil rights of Kosovar Albanians.

The KLA, as confirmed by the OSCE observer mission to Kosovo in late 1998, had been involved in countless terrorist acts and atrocities directed against Serbian and Albanian

civilians as well as minority groups in Kosovo.

Without evidence, the Yugoslav government headed by president Slobodan Milosevic was presented as being responsible for triggering a humanitarian crisis in Kosovo. The alleged violation of human rights of ethnic Albanians was used as a pretext for the extensive bombing of Yugoslavia. In a cruel irony, the most intense bombing raids were carried out in Kosovo. A majority of the victims of these raids were Kosovar Albanians.

The invasion and subsequent military occupation was upheld as a humanitarian endeavor, geared towards preventing ethnic cleansing in Kosovo directed against the Kosovar Albanians. The war on Yugoslavia was presented as a "Just War". by Professor Falk, a leading "progressive" intellectual endorsed the 1999 NATO bombing of Yugoslavia on moral and ethical grounds:

The Kosovo War was a just war because it was undertaken to avoid a likely instance of "ethnic cleansing" undertaken by the Serb leadership of former Yugoslavia, and it succeeded in giving the people of Kosovo an opportunity for a peaceful and democratic future. It was a just war despite being illegally undertaken without authorization by the United Nations, and despite being waged in a manner that unduly caused Kosovar and Serbian civilian casualties, while minimizing the risk of death or injury on the NATO side."

(http://www.wagingpeace.org/articles/2003/08/01_falk_interview.htm)

Several progressive media condemned the "Milosevic regime", while expressing mitigated support for the KLA:

At present, the only armed force capable of defending the Kosovar Albanian villages that remain is the Kosova Liberation Army (KLA). Despite political shortcomings born of the state of lawlessness into which the 90% Albanian majority has been thrown over the last 10 years, since Milosevic abolished Kosova's autonomy, the KLA last year managed to organise an army of up to 40,000 fighters.

Much left debate centres on its potential and political program and on the desirability of armed struggle in general. For example, Stephen Shalom, in an article on ZNet (its contributing editors include Noam Chomsky and Edward Said) that incisively sums up the case against both NATO and Milosevic, states: "I am sympathetic to the argument that says that if people want to fight for their rights, if they are not asking others to do it for them, then they ought to be provided with the weapons to help them succeed. Such an argument seemed to me persuasive with respect to Bosnia."

....

Michel Chossudovsky, a professor of economics at the University of Ottawa, has set out the most meticulous frame-up in a piece entitled "Freedom Fighters Financed by Organised Crime", which has been doing the internet circuit. Full of half-truths, assumptions and innuendoes about the KLA's alleged use of drug money, Chossudovsky's article seeks to discredit the KLA as a genuine liberation movement representing the aspirations of the oppressed Albanian majority.

(Michael Karadjis, Chossudovskys frame-up of the KLA, Green Left Review, <http://mihalisk.blogspot.com/2005/08/chossudovskys-frame-up-of-kla-1999.htm> |

Nine years and two wars later, the Kosovo issue has re-emerged. It is an integral part of the broader military roadmap. It is intimately related to the post 9/11 US led wars in Central Asia and the Middle East.

The Balkans constitute the gateway to Eurasia. The 1999 invasion establishes a permanent US military presence in Southern Europe, which serves the broader US led war. Yugoslavia, Afghanistan and Iraq: these three theater wars were waged on humanitarian grounds. Without exception, in all three countries, US military bases were established.

Below is my original April 1999 article on the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), published barely three weeks after the onslaught of the NATO bombings, almost nine years ago.

Kosovo “Freedom Fighters” Financed by Organised Crime

By Michel Chossudovsky

10 April 1999

Heralded by the global media as a humanitarian peace-keeping mission, NATO’s ruthless bombing of Belgrade and Pristina goes far beyond the breach of international law. While Slobodan Milosevic is demonised, portrayed as a remorseless dictator, the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) is upheld as a self-respecting nationalist movement struggling for the rights of ethnic Albanians. The truth of the matter is that the KLA is sustained by organised crime with the tacit approval of the United States and its allies.

Following a pattern set during the War in Bosnia, public opinion has been carefully misled. The multibillion dollar Balkans narcotics trade has played a crucial role in “financing the conflict” in Kosovo in accordance with Western economic, strategic and military objectives. Amply documented by European police files, acknowledged by numerous studies, the links of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) to criminal syndicates in Albania, Turkey and the European Union have been known to Western governments and intelligence agencies since the mid-1990s.

” ... The financing of the Kosovo guerrilla war poses critical questions and it sorely tests claims of an “ethical” foreign policy. Should the West back a guerrilla army that appears to partly financed by organised crime.”[1]

While KLA leaders were shaking hands with US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright at Rambouillet, Europol (the European Police Organization based in The Hague) was “preparing a report for European interior and justice ministers on a connection between the KLA and Albanian drug gangs.”[2] In the meantime, the rebel army has been skillfully heralded by the global media (in the months preceding the NATO bombings) as broadly representative of the interests of ethnic Albanians in Kosovo.

With KLA leader Hashim Thaci (a 29 year “freedom fighter”) appointed as chief negotiator at Rambouillet, the KLA has become the de facto helmsman of the peace process on behalf of the ethnic Albanian majority and this despite its links to the drug trade. The West was relying on its KLA puppets to rubber-stamp an agreement which would have transformed Kosovo into an occupied territory under Western Administration.

Ironically Robert Gelbard, America’s special envoy to Bosnia, had described the KLA last

year [1998] as “terrorists”. Christopher Hill, America’s chief negotiator and architect of the Rambouillet agreement, “has also been a strong critic of the KLA for its alleged dealings in drugs.”[3] Moreover, barely a few two months before Rambouillet, the US State Department had acknowledged (based on reports from the US Observer Mission) the role of the KLA in terrorising and uprooting ethnic Albanians:

” ... the KLA harass or kidnap anyone who comes to the police, ... KLA representatives had threatened to kill villagers and burn their homes if they did not join the KLA [a process which has continued since the NATO bombings]... [T]he KLA harassment has reached such intensity that residents of six villages in the Stimlje region are “ready to flee.”[4]

While backing a “freedom movement” with links to the drug trade, the West seems also intent in bypassing the civilian Kosovo Democratic League and its leader Ibrahim Rugova who has called for an end to the bombings and expressed his desire to negotiate a peaceful settlement with the Yugoslav authorities.[5] It is worth recalling that a few days before his March 31 Press Conference, Rugova had been reported by the KLA (alongside three other leaders including Fehmi Agani) to have been killed by the Serbs.

Covert financing of “freedom fighters”

Remember Oliver North and the Contras? The pattern in Kosovo is similar to other CIA covert operations in Central America, Haiti and Afghanistan where “freedom fighters” were financed through the laundering of drug money. Since the onslaught of the Cold War, Western intelligence agencies have developed a complex relationship to the illegal narcotics trade. In case after case, drug money laundered in the international banking system has financed covert operations.

According to author Alfred McCoy, the pattern of covert financing was established in the Indochina war. In the 1960s, the Meo army in Laos was funded by the narcotics trade as part of Washington’s military strategy against the combined forces of the neutralist government of Prince Souvanna Phouma and the Pathet Lao.[6]

The pattern of drug politics set in Indochina has since been replicated in Central America and the Caribbean. “The rising curve of cocaine imports to the US”, wrote journalist John Dinges “followed almost exactly the flow of US arms and military advisers to Central America”.[7]

The military in Guatemala and Haiti, to which the CIA provided covert support, were known to be involved in the trade of narcotics into Southern Florida. And as revealed in the Iran-Contra and Bank of Commerce and Credit International (BCCI) scandals, there was strong evidence that covert operations were funded through the laundering of drug money. “Dirty money” recycled through the banking system—often through an anonymous shell company—became “covert money,” used to finance various rebel groups and guerrilla movements including the Nicaraguan Contras and the Afghan Mujahadeen. According to a 1991 *Time* magazine report:

“Because the US wanted to supply the mujehadeen rebels in Afghanistan with stinger missiles and other military hardware it needed the full cooperation of Pakistan. By the mid-1980s, the CIA operation in Islamabad was one of the largest US intelligence stations in the World. ‘If BCCI is such an embarrassment

to the US that forthright investigations are not being pursued it has a lot to do with the blind eye the US turned to the heroin trafficking in Pakistan', said a US intelligence officer." [8]

America and Germany join hands

Since the early 1990s, Bonn and Washington have joined hands in establishing their respective spheres of influence in the Balkans. Their intelligence agencies have also collaborated. According to intelligence analyst John Whitley, covert support to the Kosovo rebel army was established as a joint endeavour between the CIA and Germany's Bundes Nachrichten Dienst (BND) (which previously played a key role in installing a right-wing nationalist government under Franjo Tudjman in Croatia). [9] The task to create and finance the KLA was initially given to Germany: "They used German uniforms, East German weapons and were financed, in part, with drug money". [10] According to Whitley, the CIA was subsequently instrumental in training and equipping the KLA in Albania. [11]

The covert activities of Germany's BND were consistent with Bonn's intent to expand its "Lebensraum" into the Balkans. Prior to the onset of the civil war in Bosnia, Germany and its Foreign Minister Hans Dietrich Genscher had actively supported secession; it had "forced the pace of international diplomacy" and pressured its Western allies to recognize Slovenia and Croatia. According to the Geopolitical Drug Watch, both Germany and the US favoured (although not officially) the formation of a "Greater Albania" encompassing Albania, Kosovo and parts of Macedonia. [12] According to Sean Gervasi, Germany was seeking a free hand among its allies "to pursue economic dominance in the whole of Mitteleuropa." [13]

Islamic fundamentalism in support of the KLA

Bonn and Washington's "hidden agenda" consisted in triggering nationalist liberation movements in Bosnia and Kosovo with the ultimate purpose of destabilising Yugoslavia. The latter objective was also carried out "by turning a blind eye" to the influx of mercenaries and financial support from Islamic fundamentalist organisations. [14]

Mercenaries financed by Saudi Arabia and Kuwait had been fighting in Bosnia. [15] And the Bosnian pattern was replicated in Kosovo: Mujahadeen mercenaries from various Islamic countries are reported to be fighting alongside the KLA in Kosovo. German, Turkish and Afghan instructors were reported to be training the KLA in guerrilla and diversion tactics. [16]

According to a Deutsche Press-Agentur report, financial support from Islamic countries to the KLA had been channelled through the former Albanian chief of the National Information Service (NIS), Bashkim Gazidede. [17] "Gazidede, reportedly a devout Moslem who fled Albania in March of last year [1997], is presently [1998] being investigated for his contacts with Islamic terrorist organizations." [18]

The supply route for arming KLA "freedom fighters" are the rugged mountainous borders of Albania with Kosovo and Macedonia. Albania is also a key point of transit of the Balkans drug route which supplies Western Europe with grade four heroin. Seventy-five percent of the heroin entering Western Europe is from Turkey. And a large part of drug shipments originating in Turkey transits through the Balkans. According to the US Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), "it is estimated that 4-6 metric tons of heroin leave each month from Turkey having [through the Balkans] as destination Western Europe." [19] A recent intelligence report by Germany's Federal Criminal Agency suggests that: "Ethnic Albanians

are now the most prominent group in the distribution of heroin in Western consumer countries.”[20]

The laundering of dirty money

In order to thrive, the criminal syndicates involved in the Balkans narcotics trade need friends in high places. Smuggling rings with alleged links to the Turkish State are said to control the trafficking of heroin through the Balkans “cooperating closely with other groups with which they have political or religious ties” including criminal groups in Albanian and Kosovo.[21] In this new global financial environment, powerful undercover political lobbies connected to organized crime cultivate links to prominent political figures and officials of the military and intelligence establishment.

The narcotics trade nonetheless uses respectable banks to launder large amounts of dirty money. While comfortably removed from the smuggling operations per se, powerful banking interests in Turkey but mainly those in financial centres in Western Europe discretely collect fat commissions in a multibillion dollar money laundering operation. These interests have high stakes in ensuring a safe passage of drug shipments into Western European markets.

The Albanian connection

Arms smuggling from Albania into Kosovo and Macedonia started at the beginning of 1992, when the Democratic Party came to power, headed by President Sali Berisha. An expansive underground economy and cross border trade had unfolded. A triangular trade in oil, arms and narcotics had developed largely as a result of the embargo imposed by the international community on Serbia and Montenegro and the blockade enforced by Greece against Macedonia.

Industry and agriculture in Kosovo were spearheaded into bankruptcy following the IMF’s lethal “economic medicine” imposed on Belgrade in 1990. The embargo was imposed on Yugoslavia. Ethnic Albanians and Serbs were driven into abysmal poverty. Economic collapse created an environment which fostered the progress of illicit trade. In Kosovo, the rate of unemployment increased to a staggering 70 percent (according to Western sources).

Poverty and economic collapse served to exacerbate simmering ethnic tensions. Thousands of unemployed youths “barely out of their teens” from an impoverished population, were drafted into the ranks of the KLA ...[22]

In neighbouring Albania, the free market reforms adopted since 1992 had created conditions which favoured the criminalisation of state institutions. Drug money was also laundered in the Albanian pyramids (ponzi schemes) which mushroomed during the government of former President Sali Berisha (1992-1997).[23] These shady investment funds were an integral part of the economic reforms inflicted by Western creditors on Albania.

Drug barons in Kosovo, Albania and Macedonia (with links to the Italian Mafia) had become the new economic elites, often associated with Western business interests. In turn the financial proceeds of the trade in drugs and arms were recycled towards other illicit activities (and vice versa) including a vast prostitution racket between Albania and Italy. Albanian criminal groups operating in Milan, “have become so powerful running prostitution rackets that they have even taken over the Calabrians in strength and influence.”[24]

The application of “strong economic medicine” under the guidance of the Washington based

Bretton Woods institutions had contributed to wrecking Albania's banking system and precipitating the collapse of the Albanian economy. The resulting chaos enabled American and European transnationals to carefully position themselves. Several Western oil companies including Occidental, Shell and British Petroleum had their eyes riveted on Albania's abundant and unexplored oil-deposits. Western investors were also gawking Albania's extensive reserves of chrome, copper, gold, nickel and platinum.... The Adenauer Foundation had been lobbying in the background on behalf of German mining interests.[25]

Berisha's Minister of Defence Safet Zoulali (alleged to have been involved in the illegal oil and narcotics trade) was the architect of the agreement with Germany's Preussag (handing over control over Albania's chrome mines) against the competing bid of the US led consortium of Macalloy Inc. in association with Rio Tinto Zimbabwe (RTZ).[26]

Large amounts of narco-dollars had also been recycled into the privatisation programmes leading to the acquisition of state assets by the mafias. In Albania, the privatisation programme had led virtually overnight to the development of a property owning class firmly committed to the "free market". In Northern Albania, this class was associated with the Guegue "families" linked to the Democratic Party.

Controlled by the Democratic Party under the presidency of Sali Berisha (1992-97), Albania's largest financial "pyramid" VEFA Holdings had been set up by the Guegue "families" of Northern Albania with the support of Western banking interests. VEFA was under investigation in Italy in 1997 for its ties to the Mafia which allegedly used VEFA to launder large amounts of dirty money.[27]

According to one press report (based on intelligence sources), senior members of the Albanian government during the presidency of Sali Berisha including cabinet members and members of the secret police SHIK were alleged to be involved in drugs trafficking and illegal arms trading into Kosovo:

"(...) The allegations are very serious. Drugs, arms, contraband cigarettes all are believed to have been handled by a company run openly by Albania's ruling Democratic Party, Shqiponja (...). In the course of 1996 Defence Minister, Safet Zhulali [was alleged] to had used his office to facilitate the transport of arms, oil and contraband cigarettes. (...) Drugs barons from Kosovo (...) operate in Albania with impunity, and much of the transportation of heroin and other drugs across Albania, from Macedonia and Greece en route to Italy, is believed to be organised by Shik, the state security police (...). Intelligence agents are convinced the chain of command in the rackets goes all the way to the top and have had no hesitation in naming ministers in their reports." [28]

The trade in narcotics and weapons was allowed to prosper despite the presence since 1993 of a large contingent of American troops at the Albanian-Macedonian border with a mandate to enforce the embargo. The West had turned a blind eye. The revenues from oil and narcotics were used to finance the purchase of arms (often in terms of direct barter): "Deliveries of oil to Macedonia (skirting the Greek embargo [in 1993-4] can be used to cover heroin, as do deliveries of kalachnikov rifles to Albanian 'brothers' in Kosovo". [29]

The Northern tribal clans or "fares" had also developed links with Italy's crime syndicates.[30] In turn, the latter played a key role in smuggling arms across the Adriatic into the Albanian ports of Dures and Valona. At the outset in 1992, the weapons channelled

into Kosovo were largely small arms including Kalashnikov AK-47 rifles, RPK and PPK machine-guns, 12.7 calibre heavy machine-guns, etc.

The proceeds of the narcotics trade has enabled the KLA to rapidly develop a force of some 30,000 men. More recently, the KLA has acquired more sophisticated weaponry including anti-aircraft and anti-armor rockets. According to Belgrade, some of the funds have come directly from the CIA “funnelled through a so-called ‘Government of Kosovo’ based in Geneva, Switzerland. Its Washington office employs the public-relations firm of Ruder Finn-notorious for its slanders of the Belgrade government”.[31]

The KLA has also acquired electronic surveillance equipment which enables it to receive NATO satellite information concerning the movement of the Yugoslav Army. The KLA training camp in Albania is said to “concentrate on heavy weapons training-rocket propelled grenades, medium caliber cannons, tanks and transporter use, as well as on communications, and command and control”. (According to Yugoslav government sources).[32]

These extensive deliveries of weapons to the Kosovo rebel army were consistent with Western geopolitical objectives. Not surprisingly, there has been a “deafening silence” of the international media regarding the Kosovo arms-drugs trade. In the words of a 1994 Report of the Geopolitical Drug Watch: “the trafficking [of drugs and arms] is basically being judged on its geostrategic implications (...) In Kosovo, drugs and weapons trafficking is fuelling geopolitical hopes and fears”...[33]

The fate of Kosovo had already been carefully laid out prior to the signing of the 1995 Dayton agreement. NATO had entered an unwholesome “marriage of convenience” with the mafia. “Freedom fighters” were put in place, the narcotics trade enabled Washington and Bonn to “finance the Kosovo conflict” with the ultimate objective of destabilising the Belgrade government and fully recolonising the Balkans. The destruction of an entire country is the outcome. Western governments which participated in the NATO operation bear a heavy burden of responsibility in the deaths of civilians, the impoverishment of both the ethnic Albanian and Serbian populations and the plight of those who were brutally uprooted from towns and villages in Kosovo as a result of the bombings.

Notes:

1. Roger Boyes and Eske Wright, Drugs Money Linked to the Kosovo Rebels, The Times, London, Monday, March 24, 1999.
2. Ibid.
3. Philip Smucker and Tim Butcher, “Shifting stance over KLA has betrayed’ Albanians”, Daily Telegraph, London, 6 April 1999
4. KDOM Daily Report, released by the Bureau of European and Canadian Affairs, Office of South Central European Affairs, U.S. Department of State, Washington, DC, December 21, 1998; Compiled by EUR/SCE (202-647-4850) from daily reports of the US element of the Kosovo Diplomatic Observer Mission, December 21, 1998.
5. “Rugova, sous protection serbe appelle a l’arret des raides”, Le Devoir, Montreal, 1 April 1999.
6. See Alfred W. McCoy, The Politics of Heroin in Southeast Asia, Harper and Row, New York, 1972.
7. See John Dinges, Our Man in Panama, The Shrewd Rise and Brutal Fall of Manuel Noriega, Times Books, New York, 1991.

8. "The Dirtiest Bank of All," Time, July 29, 1991, p. 22.
9. Truth in Media, Phoenix, 2 April, 1999; see also Michel Collon, Poker menteur, editions EPO, Brussels, 1997.
10. Quoted in Truth in Media, Phoenix, 2 April, 1999).
11. Ibid.
12. Geopolitical Drug Watch, No 32, June 1994, p. 4
13. Sean Gervasi, "Germany, US and the Yugoslav Crisis", Covert Action Quarterly, No. 43, Winter 1992-93).
14. See Daily Telegraph, 29 December 1993.
15. For further details see Michel Collon, Poker menteur, editions EPO, Brussels, 1997, p. 288.
16. Truth in Media, Kosovo in Crisis, Phoenix, 2 April 1999.
17. Deutsche Presse-Agentur, March 13, 1998.
18. Ibid.
19. Daily News, Ankara, 5 March 1997.
20. Quoted in Boyes and Wright, op cit.
21. ANA, Athens, 28 January 1997, see also Turkish Daily News, 29 January 1997.
22. Brian Murphy, KLA Volunteers Lack Experience, The Associated Press, 5 April 1999.
23. See Geopolitical Drug Watch, No. 35, 1994, p. 3, see also Barry James, in Balkans, Arms for Drugs, The International Herald Tribune, Paris, June 6, 1994.
24. The Guardian, 25 March 1997.
25. For further details see Michel Chossudovsky, La crisi albanese, Edizioni Gruppo Abele, Torino, 1998.
26. Ibid.
27. Andrew Gumbel, The Gangster Regime We Fund, The Independent, February 14, 1997, p. 15.
28. Ibid.
29. Geopolitical Drug Watch, No. 35, 1994, p. 3.
30. Geopolitical Drug Watch, No 66, p. 4.
31. Quoted in Workers' World, May 7, 1998.
32. See Government of Yugoslavia at <http://www.gov.yu/terrorism/terroristcamps.html>.
33. Geopolitical Drug Watch, No 32, June 1994, p. 4.\



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Michel Chossudovsky is an award-winning author, Professor of Economics (emeritus) at the University of Ottawa, Founder and Director of the Centre for Research on Globalization (CRG), Montreal, Editor of Global Research. He has undertaken field research in Latin America, Asia, the Middle East, sub-Saharan Africa and the Pacific and has written extensively on the economies of developing countries with a focus on poverty and social inequality. He has also undertaken research in Health Economics (UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), UNFPA, CIDA, WHO, Government of Venezuela, John Hopkins International Journal of Health Services (1979, 1983) He is the author of 13 books including The Globalization of Poverty and The New World Order (2003), America's "War on Terrorism" (2005), The Globalization of War, America's Long War against Humanity (2015). He is a contributor to the Encyclopaedia Britannica. His writings have been published in more than twenty languages. In 2014, he was awarded the Gold Medal for Merit of the Republic of Serbia for his writings on NATO's war of aggression against Yugoslavia. He can be reached at crgeditor@yahoo.com

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