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## **GOVERNMENT DECIDES TO USE THE ARMY AND SECRET SERVICES IN THE FIGHT AGAINST NARCOTICS**

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The Albanian government announced today (29.03) that it has adopted a special plan against the Cultivation and Trafficking of Cannabis for the period 2017-2020.

This plan aims at launching a frontal attack aiming to identify, discover and destroy criminal groups which are active in the domain of the cultivation and trafficking of cannabis.

Deputy Prime Minister Niko Peleshi said that starting this year, State Police, law enforcement agencies and all other relevant agencies will be mobilized in a joined and broad operation, through which the government is aiming to identify all attempts to cultivate or traffic narcotics since the very beginning.

This operation will use the capacities of the State Police, intelligent services, army, agriculture, environment, healthcare, local government, international partners, etc, Mr. Peleshi said, announcing that for the very first time, the army and secret services will be involved in the fight against narcotics.

Meanwhile, the plan also includes several other measures, such as punishment for central and local government officials, who are unable to efficiently control the territory for which they are responsible.

Meanwhile, there will also be a process of evaluation and vetting for officials who are involved in this operation.

The government has also decided to identify and seize proceeds of crime.

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Cultivation and traffic of cannabis has been identified as a phenomenon in Albania since 1991. The following years have been an incessant war between law enforcement agencies and traffic rings.

Open political support for the cultivation of cannabis in the commune of Lazarat in Gjirokastra and beyond until 2013, created the necessary conditions for criminal groups, which for more than a decade, managed to consolidate their finances, networks, markets and political connections.

The negative model created in Lazarat not only helped the strengthening of criminal groups and rings, but it also encouraged the cultivation of cannabis in other regions of the country.

Some experts suggest that the operation against drug lords in Lazarat in 2014, led to criminal energies which were previously focused in this region, to be spread in other areas of the country.

Last year, cultivation of marijuana was spread almost all over the country. Some speculate that this traffic circulates billions of dollars which is shared between traffickers in Albania and abroad, mainly in neighboring Italy and Greece.

By Edison Kurani

<http://www.balkaneu.com/government-decides-to-use-the-army-for-secret-operations-in-the-fight-against-cultivation-of-narcotics/>

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