

---

## **NATO URGES KOSOVO TO 'CONSULT FULLY' ON ARMY PLANS**

-

08.10.2018

---

Balkan Insight (5 October 2018)

NATO has said it supports the continued "development" of the Kosovo Security Force, KSF, but that major changes should follow consultation with all communities affected, and with NATO itself.

"It is important that any initiatives regarding the mandate of the Kosovo Security Force should be fully consulted with all communities in Kosovo and with NATO Allies, NATO told BIRN in a written answer.

The KSF is a professional force and source of regional stability, according to NATO, pointing out also that the alliance remains committed to guarding the security and stability of Kosovo through its running operation, KFOR.

Draft laws expanding the mandate of KSF will be sent to Kosovo's parliament soon, after being approved by Kosovo's government and the parliamentary committee on Internal Affairs, Security and Oversight of the KSF.

As rarely happens in Kosovo, the draft laws were supported on Tuesday in the parliamentary committee by all political parties, except for the Kosovo Serb representatives from Lista Srpska.

Ethnic minority Serbian MPs take their line on most issues from Serbia itself, which contests Kosovo's statehood, and strongly opposes the idea of Kosovo having a regular army.

We are doing our job, from the President and Prime Minister down to all of us, the leader of the governing Democratic Party of Kosovo, PDK, and the speaker of parliament, Kadri Veseli, said on Friday.

He referred to the KSF as the Kosovo Liberation Army, KLA, the guerrilla force that took on the Serbian police and army in the 1990s.

It is a matter of days or weeks to the transformation of the Kosovo Liberation Army \* the KSF is the KLA, he stated.

Over the last year, Kosovo institutions have tried in vain to change the KSFs mandate, to make it more of a regular army.

However, these plans ran up against a constitutional obligation requiring a double majority in parliament □ meaning the support of two-thirds of all MPs and two-thirds of the 20 ethnic non-Albanian MPs.

Kosovo Serb MPs, who hold 10 of the 20 seats reserved for non-Albanian communities, have blocked every such initiative.

In spring 2017, President Hashim Thaci tried to bypass this blockade by proposing changes that would broaden the responsibilities of the KSF □ without involving the passage of constitutional amendments. But Kosovos Western allies, including NATO, opposed the move.

However, when Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj surprisingly sent the laws to be voted on in a government meeting on September, Thaci stated that it was a wrong moment.

He said he had not been informed and would need to consult Kosovo's strategic partners. But soon after, his stance changed.

At a reception to mark German Unification Day, on Thursday, Thaci said the KSF would soon have a new mandate, adding that the force had come this far through NATO partnership and this will remain the case always.

BIRN did not receive any answer from Thacis office by the time of publication on what made President change his stance on the issue.

Haradinaj said the US has also changed its stance, after meeting the US Defense Secretary, James Mattis on September 28.

Secretary Mattis confirmed once again the strong support for the KSF and the process related to the transformation of this force in accordance with the foreseen strategic plan, the PMs statement read.

When President Thaci tried to push the same initiative last year, it was criticised by the US embassy.

This transformation should be done in accordance with the Kosovo Constitution and through an inclusive and representative political process that reflects Kosovos multiethnic democracy, the US embassy said then.

<http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/nato-urges-consultation-on-kosovo-army-10-05-2018>

---

Kaynak/Source: