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# The Kosovo Liberation Army: Does Clinton Policy Support Group with Terror, Drug Ties?

From 'Terrorists' to 'Partners'

On March 24, 1999, NATO initiated air attacks on Yugoslavia (a federation of two republics, Serbia and Montenegro) in order to impose a peace agreement in the Serbian province of Kosovo, which has an ethnic Albanian majority. The Clinton Administration has not formally withdrawn its standing insistence that Belgrade sign the peace agreement, which would entail the deployment in Kosovo of some 28,000 NATO ground troops -- including 4,000 Americans -- to police the settlement. But in recent days the Clinton public line has shifted to a demand that Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic halt the offensive he has launched in Kosovo, which has led to a growing humanitarian crisis in the region, before there can be a stop to the bombing campaign.

One week into the bombing campaign, there is widespread discussion of options for further actions. One option includes forging a closer relationship between the United States and a controversial group, the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), a group which has been cited in unofficial reports for alleged ties to drug cartels and Islamic terrorist organizations. This paper will examine those allegations in the context of the currently unfolding air campaign.

## Results of Week One

The air assault is a product of a Clinton policy, which for months has been directed toward intervention in Kosovo, in either the form of the use of air power or of the introduction of a peacekeeping ground force -- or of air power followed by a ground force. [For details on the turbulent history of Kosovo and of the direction of Clinton policy leading to the current air campaign, see: RPC's "[Senate to Vote Today on Preventing Funding of Military Operations in Kosovo: Airstrikes Likely This Week](#)," 3/23/99; "[Bombing, or Ground Troops -- or Both: Clinton Kosovo Intervention Appears Imminent](#)," 2/22/99; and "[Bosnia II: The Clinton Administration Sets Course for NATO Intervention in Kosovo](#)," 8/12/98.] Just hours before the first bombs fell, the Senate voted 58 to 41 (with 38 Republicans voting in the negative) to authorize air and missile strikes against Yugoslavia (S. Con. Res. 21). The Senate then approved by voice vote a second resolution expressing support for members of the U.S. Armed Forces engaged in military operations against Yugoslavia (S. Res. 74).

Prior to the air campaign, the stated goal of Clinton policy, as noted above, was Belgrade's acceptance of the peace agreement signed by the Kosovo Albanian delegation (which included representatives of the KLA) on March 17. Now, more than a week into the air campaign, that goal appears even more elusive as the NATO attack has rallied Serbian resistance to what they see as an unjustified foreign aggression.

Since the NATO bombing campaign began, Serbian security forces also have intensified an offensive in Kosovo that began as the airstrikes appeared inevitable. According to numerous media reports, tens of thousands of Albanians are fleeing the Serb army, and police forces and paramilitary groups that, based on credible allegations, are committing widespread atrocities,

including summary executions, burnings of Albanian villages, and assassination of human rights activists and community leaders. Allied officials have denounced the apparently deliberate forced exodus of Albanian civilians as ethnic cleansing and even genocide. But according to some refugee accounts, the NATO bombing is also a factor in the exodus: "[M]ost residents of the provincial capital say they are leaving of their own accord and are not being forced out at gunpoint, as residents of several western cities and villages in Kosovo say has been happening to them. . . . Pristina residents who made it to Macedonia said their city is still largely intact, despite the targeting of ethnic Albanian businesses by Serbian gangs and several direct hits from NATO air strikes in the city center" ["Cause of Kosovar Exodus from Pristina Disputed: Serbs Are Forcing Exit, Some Claim; Others Go on Own," *Washington Times*, 3/31/99].

At the same time, the Clinton Administration, consistent with its track record on Kosovo, has ignored credible but unconfirmed evidence from sources not connected to Milosevic's Serbian government that the NATO campaign has resulted in far more civilian damage than has been acknowledged.

### **Making Things Worse?**

The Clinton Administration and NATO officials flatly reject any suggestion that their policy has exacerbated an already bad situation on the ground in Kosovo. With neighboring Albania and Macedonia in danger of being destabilized by a flood of refugees, questions are being raised about NATO's ability to continue the campaign unless positive results are evident soon:

"With critics arguing that the NATO campaign has made things worse, the alliance must slow the Serbs' onslaught or watch public support and alliance unity unravel. U.S. and NATO officials angrily rebutted the critics, arguing that Mr. Milosevic, the Serbian leader, and his forces were already on the rampage before NATO strikes began." ["NATO Is Set to Target Sites in Belgrade," *Wall Street Journal*, 3/29/99]

If the immediate NATO goal has now shifted to stopping the Serb offensive in Kosovo, observers point to three likely options [*WSJ*, 3/29/99]:

**"Option One is to continue the air campaign, increasingly targeting Serb frontline troops** [in Kosovo], but it could be days before the onslaught is really slowed." This option, which NATO has already begun to implement, is likely to entail greater risk to NATO aircraft and crews, due to the lower and slower flightpaths needed to deliver tactical strikes. Still, most observers doubt the offensive can be halted with air power alone. Late reports indicate increased bombing of targets in Belgrade, the capital of both the Yugoslav federation and the Serbian republic.

**"Option Two is to start considering intervening on the ground."** In recent days, the Clinton Administration has begun to shift its position on NATO ground troops from a categorical assurance that ground troops would go in *only* to police a peace settlement to hints that they might, depending on some unspecified "conditions," be introduced into a combat environment. For example, in comments on March 28, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs General Henry Shelton suggested that certain "assessments" had been made, but that there was as yet no political agreement on ground troops:

"There have been assessments made, but those assessments were based on varying conditions that existed in Kosovo... At this point in time, there are no plans *per se* to introduce ground troops." [*NBC's "Meet the Press,"* 3/28/99]

**"Option Three: arming the separatist Kosovo Liberation Army** to carry the war on the ground while NATO continues it from the air." This option, which would make NATO the overt air force of the KLA, would also dash any possibility of a solution that would not result in a change in Balkan borders, perhaps setting off a round of widespread regional instability. Clinton

Administrations officials have begun to suggest that independence may now be justified in view of the Serb offensive. The KLA has been explicit in its determination to not only achieve an independent Kosovo but to "liberate" Albanian-inhabited areas of Montenegro (including the Montenegrin capital, Podgorica), Macedonia (including the Macedonian capital, Skopje), and parts of northern Greece; most of these areas were in fact annexed to Albania under Axis occupation during World War II. (For a visual representation of the areas claimed by the KLA, see the map at the website of the pro-KLA Albanian-American Civic League at [www.aacl.com](http://www.aacl.com))

Note that arming and training the KLA, as called for in Option Three, would highlight serious questions about the nature of the KLA and of the Clinton Administration's relationship with it.

### **The KLA: from 'Terrorists' to 'Partners'**

The Kosovo Liberation Army "began on the radical fringe of Kosovar Albanian politics, originally made up of diehard Marxist-Leninists (who were bankrolled in the old days by the Stalinist dictatorship next door in Albania) as well as by descendants of the fascist militias raised by the Italians in World War II" ["Fog of War -- Coping With the Truth About Friend and Foe: Victims Not Quite Innocent," *New York Times*, 3/28/99]. The KLA made its military debut in February 1996 with the bombing of several camps housing Serbian refugees from wars in Croatia and Bosnia [*Jane's Intelligence Review*, 10/1/96]. The KLA (again according to the highly regarded *Jane's*,) "does not take into consideration the political or economic importance of its victims, nor does it seem at all capable of seriously hurting its enemy, the Serbian police and army. Instead, the group has attacked Serbian police and civilians arbitrarily at their weakest points. It has not come close to challenging the region's balance of military power" [*Jane's*, 10/1/96].

The group expanded its operations with numerous attacks through 1996 but was given a major boost with the collapse into chaos of neighboring Albania in 1997, which afforded unlimited opportunities for the introduction of arms into Kosovo from adjoining areas of northern Albania, which are effectively out of the control of the Albanian government in Tirana. From its inception, the KLA has targeted not only Serbian security forces, who may be seen as legitimate targets for a guerrilla insurgency, but Serbian and Albanian civilians as well.

In view of such tactics, the Clinton Administration's then-special envoy for Kosovo, Robert Gelbard, had little difficulty in condemning the KLA (also known by its Albanian initials, UCK) in terms comparable to those he used for Serbian police repression:

" 'The violence we have seen growing is incredibly dangerous,' Gelbard said. He criticized violence 'promulgated by the (Serb) police' and condemned the actions of an ethnic Albanian underground group Kosovo Liberation Army (UCK) which has claimed responsibility for a series of attacks on Serb targets. 'We condemn very strongly terrorist actions in Kosovo. The UCK is, without any questions, a terrorist group,' Gelbard said." [*Agence France Presse*, 2/23/98]

Mr. Gelbard's remarks came just before a KLA attack on a Serbian police station led to a retaliation that left dozens of Albanians dead, leading in turn to a rapid escalation of the cycle of violence. Responding to criticism that his earlier remarks might have been seen as Washington's "green light" to Belgrade that a crack-down on the KLA would be acceptable, Mr. Gelbard offered to clarify to the House Committee on International Relations:

"Questioned by lawmakers today on whether he still considered the group a terrorist organization, Mr. Gelbard said that while it has committed 'terrorist acts,' it has 'not been classified legally by the U.S. Government as a terrorist organization.' " [*New York Times*, 3/13/98]

The situation in Kosovo has since been transformed: what were once sporadic cases of KLA attacks and often heavy-handed and indiscriminate Serbian responses has now become a full-scale guerrilla war. That development appeared to be a vindication of what may have been the KLA's strategy of escalating the level of violence to the point where outside intervention would become a distinct possibility. Given the military imbalance, there is reason to believe the KLA -- which is now calling for the introduction of NATO ground troops into Kosovo [*Associated Press*, 3/27/99] -- may have always expected to achieve its goals less because of the group's own prospects for military success than because of a hoped-for outside intervention: As one fighter put it, "We hope that NATO will intervene, like it did in Bosnia, to save us" ["Both Sides in the Kosovo Conflict Seem Determined to Ignore Reality," *New York Times*, 6/22/98].

By early 1999, the Clinton Administration had completely staked the success of its Kosovo policy on either the acceptance by both sides of a pre-drafted peace agreement that would entail a NATO ground occupation of Kosovo, or, if the Albanians signed the agreement while Belgrade refused, bombing of the Serbs. By committing itself so tightly to those two alternatives, the Clinton Administration left itself with as little flexibility as it had offered the Albanians and the Serbs.

At that point for the Administration, cultivating the goodwill of the KLA -- as the most extreme element on the Albanian side, and the element which had the weapons capable of sinking any diplomatic initiative -- became an absolute imperative:

"In order to get the Albanians'... acceptance [of the peace plan], Ms. Albright offered incentives intended to show that Washington is a friend of Kosovo...Officers in the Kosovo Liberation Army would . . . be sent to the United States for training in transforming themselves from a guerrilla group into a police force or a political entity, much like the African National Congress did in South Africa." [*New York Times*, 2/24/99]

The *Times'* comparison of treatment of the KLA with that of the African National Congress (ANC) -- a group with its own history of terror attacks on political opponents, including members of the ethnic group it claims to represent -- is a telling one. In fact, it points to the seemingly consistent Clinton policy of cultivating relationships with groups known for terrorist violence -- not only the ANC, but the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and the Irish Republican Army (IRA) -- in what may be a strategy of attempting to wean away a group from its penchant for violence by adopting its cause as an element of U.S. policy.

By the time the NATO airstrikes began, the Clinton Administration's partnership with the KLA was unambiguous:

"With ethnic Albanian Kosovars poised to sign a peace accord later Thursday, the United States is moving quickly to help transform the Kosovo Liberation Army from a rag-tag band of guerrilla fighters into a political force. . . . Washington clearly sees it as a main hope for the troubled province's future. 'We want to develop a good relationship with them as they transform themselves into a politically-oriented organization,' deputy State Department spokesman James Foley said. 'We want to develop closer and better ties with this organization.'

"A strong signal of this is the deference with which U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright treats the Kosovar Albanians' chief negotiator Hashim Thaci, a 30-year-old KLA commander. Albright dispatched her top aide and spokesman James Rubin to Paris earlier this week to meet with Thaci and personally deliver to him an invitation for members of his delegation to visit the United States. Rubin, who will attend the ceremony at which the Kosovar Albanians will sign the accord, is expected to then return to Washington with five members of the delegation, including Thaci. Thaci and

Rubin have developed a 'good rapport' during the Kosovo crisis, according to U.S. officials who note that Thaci was the main delegate they convinced to sign the agreement even though the Serbs have refused to do so. [ . . . ]

" '[W]e believe that we have a lot of advice and a lot of help that we can provide to them if they become precisely the kind of political actor we would like to see them become.' Foley stressed that the KLA would not be allowed to continue as a military force but would have the chance to move forward in their quest for self government under a 'different context.' 'If we can help them and they want us to help them in that effort of transformation, I think it's nothing that anybody can argue with.' "

Such an effusive embrace by top Clinton Administration officials of an organization that only a year ago one of its own top officials labeled as "terrorist" is, to say the least, a startling development.

Even more importantly, the new Clinton/KLA partnership may obscure troubling allegations about the KLA that the Clinton Administration has thus far neglected to address.

### **Charges of Drugs, Islamic Terror -- and a Note on Sources**

No observer doubts that the large majority of fighters that have flocked to the KLA during the past year or so (since it began large-scale military operations) are ordinary Kosovo Albanians who desire what they see as the liberation of their homeland from foreign rule. But that fact -- which amounts to a claim of innocence by association -- does not fully explain the KLA's uncertain origins, political program, sources of funding, or political alliances.

Among the most troubling aspects of the Clinton Administration's effective alliance with the KLA are numerous reports from reputable unofficial sources -- including the highly respected *Jane's* publications -- that the KLA is closely involved with:

- The extensive Albanian crime network that extends throughout Europe and into North America, including allegations that a major portion of the KLA finances are derived from that network, mainly proceeds from drug trafficking; and
- Terrorist organizations motivated by the ideology of radical Islam, including assets of Iran and of the notorious Osama bin-Ladin -- who has vowed a global terrorist war against Americans and American interests.

The final two sections of this paper give samples of these reports. (Many of these reports are available in full at [www.siri-us.com](http://www.siri-us.com), the website of an independent think tank called the Strategic Issues Research Institute of the United States, under "Background Issues".) In presenting samples of such reports for the consideration of Republican Senators and staff, RPC does not claim that these reports constitute conclusive evidence of the KLA's drug or terror ties. Nor are these reports necessarily conclusive as to the policy advisability of the Clinton Administration's support for that organization. They do, however, raise serious questions about the context in which decisions regarding American policy in the Balkans are being made by the Clinton Administration.

All of these sources are unclassified and unconnected to official agencies of the U.S. government, although some quote sources in intelligence agencies. Possible objections could be raised that the relevant U.S. government agencies may not have made available similar reports concerning the KLA. While it is not possible to discuss, in the context of this paper, what information is or is not available from classified sources, the author of this paper offers what he regards as two helpful observations. First, one should recognize that the absence of reporting on a given topic may indicate that the information has not been obtained, assembled, or disseminated by the agencies in question,

but not necessarily that it does not exist. That is, silence by official sources does not constitute disproof of unofficial sources. The second and more troubling observation is that the Clinton Administration has demonstrated, to an unprecedented degree, an unfortunate tendency -- in some cases possibly involving an improper politicization of traditionally non-political government agencies -- to manage or conceal inconvenient information that might call into question some of its policies. Examples of this tendency include:

**China espionage:** Numerous critics have faulted the Clinton Administration's less-than-forthcoming attitude towards the investigation of possible negligence regarding Chinese theft of U.S. nuclear secrets; obstruction efforts may have included misuse of the classification process. [For details, see RPC's "Contradictions Abound: Did the Administration Respond 'Vigorously' to Chinese Nuclear Espionage?" 3/24/99; "The Public Record: China's Theft of U.S. Nuclear Secrets," 3/12/99; and "Commentators Hit Clinton Administration on Nuclear Technology Theft and Suspicious China Ties," 3/12/99.] The effectiveness of the current Kosovo crisis in getting the China espionage scandal off Page 1 has not gone unnoticed: "In the days leading up to the initiation of hostilities with Serbia, it had become increasingly apparent that the usual administration damage control techniques (official denials, misleading statements, obstruction of inquiries, attacks on the accusers, etc.) were not working in the face of cascading revelations that the Clinton team had abysmally failed to address [Chinese] penetration of America's nuclear weapons laboratories.... The only option: change the subject, regardless of the cost in American lives, national treasure, and long-term interests" [Frank Gaffney, Jr., Center for Security Policy, "Hidden Trigger on Guns of Intervention?" *Washington Times*, 3/30/99].

**Mexico drug certification:** The Clinton Administration has consistently certified that Mexican authorities are cooperating with U.S. anti-drug efforts -- despite strong evidence to the contrary. [See, for example, *Los Angeles Times*, 3/25/99; *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, 2/27/99; and *The San Francisco Chronicle*, 2/26/99].

**Iranian arms shipments to Bosnia:** The Clinton Administration concealed its active cooperation with the Iranians for arms shipments to the Muslim fundamentalist regime of Alija Izetbegovic in Bosnia in violation of the United Nations arms embargo on the former Yugoslavia. [For details on the Clinton Administration's active connivance with the Iranians, see RPC's "Clinton-Approved Iranian Arms Transfers Help Turn Bosnia into Militant Islamic Base," 1/16/97.] This track record undermines the Clinton Administration's insistence that Russia, as a permanent member of the U.N. Security Council, is obligated to observe the same embargo with respect to Serbia [as stated by State Department spokesman James Rubin, daily briefing, March 24, 1999].

**Eradication of the Serbs in Krajina:** The Clinton Administration has stalled efforts to investigate what has been called the "biggest ethnic cleansing" of the Balkan wars, one which the Clinton Administration may itself have helped to facilitate:

"Investigators at the international war crimes tribunal in The Hague have concluded that the Croatian Army carried out summary executions, indiscriminate shelling of civilian populations and 'ethnic cleansing' during a 1995 assault that was a turning point in the Balkan wars, according to tribunal documents. The investigators have recommended that three Croatian generals be indicted, and an American official said this week that the indictments could come within a few weeks. . . . Any indictment of Croatian Army generals could prove politically troublesome for the Clinton Administration, which has a delicate relationship with Croatia, an American ally in preserving the peace in Bosnia with a poor human rights record. The August 1995 Croatian offensive, which drove some 100,000 Serbs from a large swath of Croatia over four days, was carried out with the tacit blessing of the United States by a Croatian Army that had been schooled in part by a group of retired American military officers. Questions still remain about the full extent of United States involvement. In

the course of the three-year investigation into the assault, the United States has failed to provide critical evidence requested by the tribunal, according to tribunal documents and officials, adding to suspicion among some there that Washington is uneasy about the investigation. Two senior Canadian military officers, for example, who were in Croatia during the offensive, testified that the assault, in which some 3,000 shells rained down on the city of Knin over 48 hours, was indiscriminate and targeted civilians. . . . A section of the tribunal's 150-page report is headed: 'The Indictment. Operation Storm, A Prima Facie Case.': 'During the course of the military offensive, the Croatian armed forces and special police committed numerous violations of international humanitarian law, including but not limited to, shelling of Knin and other cities,' the report says. 'During, and in the 100 days following the military offensive, at least 150 Serb civilians were summarily executed, and many hundreds disappeared.' The crimes also included looting and burning, the report says." ["War Crimes Panel Finds Croat Troops 'Cleansed' the Serbs," *New York Times*, 3/21/99]

The Krajina episode -- the largest in the recent Yugoslav wars, at least until this week in Kosovo -- exposes the hypocrisy of the Clinton claims as to why intervention in Kosovo is a humanitarian imperative:

"Within four days, the Croatians drove out 150,000 Serbs, the largest [until this week] ethnic cleansing of the entire Balkan wars. Investigators in the Hague have concluded that this campaign was carried out with brutality, wanton murder, and indiscriminate shelling of civilians. . . . Krajina is Kosovo writ large. And yet, at the same time, the U.S. did not stop or even protest the Croatian action. The Clinton Administration tacitly encouraged it." [Charles Krauthammer, "The Clinton Doctrine," *Time* magazine, 4/5/99]

In short, the absence of official confirmation of the reports cited below can hardly be considered the last word in the matter. And given this Administration's record, one might treat with some degree of skepticism even a flat denial of KLA drug and terror ties -- which thus far has not been offered. As the Clinton Administration searches for new options in its Kosovo policy, these reports about KLA should not be lightly dismissed.

### **Reports on KLA Drug and Criminal Links**

Elements informally known as the "Albanian mafia," composed largely of ethnic Albanians from Kosovo, have for several years been a feature of the criminal underworld in a number of cities in Europe and North America; they have been particularly prominent in the trade in illegal narcotics. [See, for example, "The Albanian Cartel: Filling the Crime Void," *Jane's Intelligence Review*, November 1995.] The cities where the Albanian cartels are located are also fertile ground for fundraising for support of the Albanian cause in Kosovo. [See, for example, "Albanians in Exile Send Millions of Dollars to Support the KLA," *BBC*, 3/12/99.]

The reported link between drug activities and arms purchases for anti-Serb Albanian forces in Kosovo predates the formation of the KLA, and indeed, may be seen as a key resource that allowed the KLA to establish itself as a force in the first place:

"Narcotics smuggling has become a prime source of financing for civil wars already under way -- or rapidly brewing -- in southern Europe and the eastern Mediterranean, according to a report issued here this week. The report, by the Paris-based Observatoire Geopolitique des Drogues, or Geopolitical Observatory of Drugs, identifies belligerents in the former Yugoslav republics and Turkey as key players in the region's accelerating drugs-for-arms traffic. Albanian nationalists in ethnically tense Macedonia and the Serbian province of Kosovo have built a vast heroin network, leading from the opium

fields of Pakistan to black-market arms dealers in Switzerland, which transports up to \$2 billion worth of the drug annually into the heart of Europe, the report says. More than 500 Kosovo or Macedonian Albanians are in prison in Switzerland for drug- or arms-trafficking offenses, and more than 1,000 others are under indictment. The arms are reportedly stockpiled in Kosovo for eventual use against the Serbian government in Belgrade, which imposed a violent crackdown on Albanian autonomy advocates in the province five years ago." ["Separatists Supporting Themselves with Traffic in Narcotics," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 6/10/94]

At the same time, many Albanians in the diaspora have made voluntary contributions to the KLA and are offended at suggestions of drug money funding of that organization:

"Nick Ndrejaj, who retired from the real estate business, lives on a pension in Daytona Beach, Fla. But the retiree has managed to scrape up some money to send to the Kosovo Liberation Army, the rebel force that is opposing Yugoslav strongman Slobodan Milosevic. 'It's hard, but we have had to do this all our lives,' says the elderly man. Mr. Ndrejaj is one of many Albanians in America who are sending all they can spare to aid their beleaguered compatriots in central Europe. The disaster in Kosovo is uniting the minority into a major fund-raising and congressional lobbying effort. [ . . . ]

"Typical of the donors is Agim Jusufi, a building superintendent on Manhattan's West Side. Mr. Jusufi gets a weekly paycheck. He describes himself as an ordinary 'working man.' However, he has donated \$5,000 to the KLA. 'It is always stressed that we should donate when we can,' he says, 'We are in a grave moment, so we are raising money.' Jusufi bristles over reports that drug money funds the KLA. There has been an Albanian organized-crime element involved in the drug trade for decades. But, he says, in this country, the money comes from hard-working immigrants. 'We have canceled checks to prove it,' he says. " ["Pulling Political and Purse Strings," *Christian Science Monitor*, 3/31/99]

Without access to the KLA's ledgers, it is hard to estimate what part of the group's funds might come from legitimate sources and what part from drugs. One unnamed intelligence source puts the percentage of drug money in the KLA's coffers at one-half ["Drugs Money Linked to the Kosovo Rebels," *The Times* (London), 3/24/99]. The following is a sample of the reports linking the KLA to funding by narcotics-smuggling crime organizations:

**"The Kosovo Liberation Army, which has won the support of the West for its guerrilla struggle against the heavy armour of the Serbs, is a Marxist-led force funded by dubious sources, including drug money. That is the judgment of senior police officers across Europe. An investigation by The Times has established that police forces in three Western European countries, together with Europol, the European police authority, are separately investigating growing evidence that drug money is funding the KLA's leap from obscurity to power. The financing of the Kosovo guerrilla war poses critical questions and it sorely tests claims to an 'ethical' foreign policy. Should the West back a guerrilla army that appears to be partly financed by organised crime? Could the KLA's need for funds be fuelling the heroin trade across Europe? . . . As well as diverting charitable donations from exiled Kosovans, some of the KLA money is thought to come from drug dealing. Sweden is investigating suspicions of a KLA drug connection. 'We have intelligence leading us to believe that there could be a connection between drug money and the Kosovo Liberation Army,' said Walter Kege, head of the drug enforcement unit in the Swedish police intelligence service. Supporting intelligence has come from other states. 'We have yet to find direct evidence, but our experience tells us that the channels for trading hard drugs are also used for**



weapons,' said one Swiss police commander. . . . One Western intelligence report quoted by Berliner Zeitung says that DM900 million has reached Kosovo since the guerrillas began operations and half the sum is said to be illegal drug money. In particular, European countries are investigating the Albanian connection: whether Kosovan Albanians living primarily in Germany and Switzerland are creaming off the profits from inner-city heroin dealing and sending the cash to the KLA. Albania -- which plays a key role in channelling money to the Kosovans -- is at the hub of Europe's drug trade. An intelligence report which was prepared by Germany's Federal Criminal Agency concluded: 'Ethnic Albanians are now the most prominent group in the distribution of heroin in Western consumer countries.' Europol, which is based in The Hague, is preparing a report for European interior and justice ministers on a connection between the KLA and Albanian drug gangs. Police in the Czech Republic recently tracked down a Kosovo Albanian drug dealer named Doboshi who had escaped from a Norwegian prison where he was serving 12 years for heroin trading. A raid on Doboshi's apartment turned up documents linking him with arms purchases for the KLA." ["Drugs Money Linked to the Kosovo Rebels," *The Times* (London), 3/24/99]

"Western intelligence agencies believe the UCK [KLA] has been re-arming with the aid of money from drug-smuggling through Albania, along with donations from the Albanian diaspora in Western Europe and North America. . . . Albania has become the crime capital of Europe. The most powerful groups in the country are organized criminals who use Albania to grow, process, and store a large percentage of the illegal drugs destined for Western Europe. . . . Albania's criminal gangs are actively supporting the war in Kosovo. Many of them have family links to Albanian groups in Kosovo and support them with arms and other supplies, either out of family solidarity or solely for profit. These links mean the UCK fighters have a secure base area and reasonably good lines of communication to the outside world. Serb troops have tried to seal the border but with little success." ["Life in the Balkan 'Tinderbox' Remains as Dangerous as Ever," *Jane's Intelligence Review*, 3/1/99]

"Drugs traffickers in Italy, in Germany, in Spain, in France, and in Norway: Kosovo Albanians. The men from the Special Operations Section [ROS] of the carabinieri [i.e., Italian national police], under the leadership of General Mario Mori, have succeeded in neutralizing a fully fledged network of Albanian drugs traffickers. The leader of this network is a certain Gashi Agim, aged 33, originally from Pristina, the capital of the small region that is being torn apart by the struggle between on the one hand the local population, 90 percent of whom are of Albanian ethnic origin and who are calling for independence from Serbia, and [the Yugoslav government] on the other . . . Gashi was arrested early this summer along with 124 drugs traffickers. 'Milan at this juncture has become a crossroads of interests for many fighting groups,' a detective with the ROS explained. 'These groups include also the Albanians from Kosovo who are among the most dangerous traffickers in drugs and in arms. . . . The war in Kosovo has partly slowed down the criminals' business because many Albanians have been forced to take care of their families. Some of them are activists in the armed movement of the KLA fighters and have gone home to fight. They feel Albanian. They are fighting to achieve annexation to Albania. And it is precisely there that at least a part of the sea of money that the Albanian drugs traffickers have amassed is reported to have ended up, to support the families and to fund both certain political personalities and the anti-Serb movement. In spring, a number of Albanian drugs traffickers actually went as far as to take part in the organization of a rally in favor of independence for Kosovo. . . . Drugs, arms, and the Koran: Could this be the murderous crime mix of the next few years?' ["Albanian Mafia,

This Is How It Helps The Kosovo Guerrilla Fighters," *Corriere della Sera* (Milan, Italy), 10/15/98]

**"A group of Kosovo Albanians smuggling arms back to their troubled province were among 100 people arrested in a massive, countrywide anti-drug operation in Italy, police here said Tuesday. All the 100 -- 90 of whom were arrested in Italy, the rest in other European countries -- face weapons charges related to international drug trafficking. Anti-Mafia prosecutors in Milan, who conducted the operation with paramilitary police units, identified eight criminal structures active on an international scale. One hundred kilos (220 pounds) of heroin and cocaine was seized in the bust across several Italian regions. Investigators said the groups used Milan as a base, with cafes, restaurants, garages and other firms acting as fronts. The Kosovar Albanian gang allegedly used drug money to buy the weapons in Italy, which were then sent to Kosovo where a three-month conflict is pitting Serbian forces against armed ethnic Albanians seeking independence. Another separate group of Egyptians with links to Calabrian and Albanian gangs were arrested on suspicions of laundering money through Switzerland for use by fundamentalists in Egypt." ["Major Italian Drug Bust Breaks Kosovo Arms Trafficking," Agence France-Presse, 6/9/98]**

**"The Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) has claimed responsibility for more than 50 attacks on Serbs and Albanians loyal to the Belgrade government, but little is known about the separatist group. . . . Details of the KLA, which the United States calls a terrorist organization, are sketchy at best. Western intelligence sources believe there are no more than several hundred members under arms with military training. Serbian police estimate there are at least 2,000 well-armed men. The KLA is said to rely heavily on a huge network of informers and sympathizers, enabling it to blend easily among the population. The Western sources also believe the core of the organization consists of Albanians who fled into exile in the 1970s and based their operation in Switzerland, where its funding is gathered from all over the world. 'If the West wants to nip the KLA in the bud, all it has to do is crack down on its financial nerve center in Switzerland,' one source said. Part of the funding, this source believes, comes from the powerful Albanian mafia organizations that deal in narcotics, prostitution and arms smuggling across Europe. The KLA has admitted having training bases in northern Albania, which the Albanian government does not condone but is powerless to stop." ["Speculation Plentiful, Facts Few About Kosovo Separatist Group," *Baltimore Sun*, 3/6/98]**

**"The bulk of the financing of the UCK [KLA] seems to originate from two sources: drug-related operations and Kosovo Albanian emigres in the West. The former Yugoslavia has always been on the main European drug transit route. With the break-up of that country, the route has been somewhat modified; West-Europe-bound narcotics now enter Macedonia and Albania and are then distributed towards Western Europe through Kosovo, Montenegro, Bosnia, and Croatia." [*Jane's Intelligence Review*, "Another Balkans Bloodbath? -- Part One," 2/1/98]**

**"Socially organized in extended families bound together in clan alliances, Kosovar Albanians dominate the Albanian mafia in the southern Balkans. Other than Kosovo, the Albanian mafia is also active in northern Albania and western Macedonia. In this context, the so-called 'Balkan Medellin' is made up of a number of geographically connected border towns . . . . If left unchecked, this growing Albanian narco-terrorism could lead to a Colombian syndrome in the southern Balkans, or the emergence of a situation in which the Albanian mafia**

becomes powerful enough to control one or more states in the region. In practical terms, this will involve either Albania or Macedonia, or both. Politically, this is now being done by channelling growing foreign exchange (forex) profits from narco-terrorism into local governments and political parties. In Albania, the ruling Democratic Party (DP) led by President Sali Berisha is now widely suspected of tacitly tolerating and even directly profiting from drug-trafficking for wider politico-economic reasons, namely the financing of secessionist political parties and other groupings in Kosovo and Macedonia." ["The Balkan Medellin," *Jane's* 3/1/95; Albanian then-president Berisha lost power in 1997 and is now a known KLA patron in northern Albania.]

## Reports on Islamic Terror Links

The KLA's main staging area is in the vicinity of the town of Tropoje in northern Albania [*Jane's International Defense Review*, 2/1/99]. Tropoje, the hometown and current base of former Albanian president Sali Berisha, a major KLA patron, is also a known center for Islamic terrorists connected with Saudi renegade Osama bin-Ladin. [For a report on the presence of bin-Ladin assets in Tropoje and connections to anti-American Islamic terrorism, see "U.S. Blasts' Possible Mideast Ties: Alleged Terrorists Investigated in Albania," *Washington Post*, 8/12/98.]

The following reports note the presence of foreign *mujahedin* (i.e., Islamic holy warriors) in the Kosovo war, some of them *jihad* veterans from Bosnia, Chechnya, and Afghanistan. Some of the reports specifically cite assets of Iran or bin-Ladin, or both, in support of the KLA. To some, "mujahedin" does not necessarily equal "terrorists." But since the foreign fighters have not been considerate enough to provide an organizational chart detailing the exact relationship among the various groups, the reported presence of foreign fighters together with known terrorists in the KLA's stronghold at least raises serious questions about the implications for the Clinton Administration's increasingly close ties to the KLA:

**"Serbian officials say Mujahideen have formed groups that remained behind in Bosnia. Groups from Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and Chechnya are also involved in Albanian guerrilla operations. A document found on the body of Alija Rabic, an Albanian UCK member killed in a border crossing incident last July, indicated he was guiding a 50-man group from Albania into Kosovo. The group included one Yemeni and 16 Saudis, six of whom bore passports with Macedonian Albanian names. Other UCK rebels killed crossing the Albanian frontier have carried Bosnian Muslim Federation papers."** [*Jane's International Defense Review*, "Unhealthy Climate in Kosovo as Guerrillas Gear Up for a Summer Confrontation," 2/1/99]

**"Mujahidin fighters have joined the Kosovo Liberation Army, dimming prospects of a peaceful solution to the conflict and fuelling fears of heightened violence next spring. . . . Their arrival in Kosovo may force Washington to review its policy in the Serbian province and will deepen Western dismay with the KLA and its tactics. . . . 'Captain Dula', the local KLA commander, was clearly embarrassed at the unexpected presence of foreign journalists and said that he had little idea who was sending the Mujahidin or where they came from; only that it was neither Kosovo nor Albania. 'I've got no information about them,' Captain Dula said. 'We don't talk about it.' . . . American diplomats in the region, especially Robert Gelbard, the special envoy, have often expressed fears of an Islamic hardline infiltration into the Kosovo independence movement. . . . American intelligence has raised the possibility of a link between Osama bin Laden, the Saudi expatriate blamed for the bombing in August of US embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam, and the KLA. Several of Bin Laden's supporters were arrested in Tirana, the**

**Albanian capital, and deported this summer, and the chaotic conditions in the country have allowed Muslim extremists to settle there, often under the guise of humanitarian workers. . . . 'I interviewed one guy from Saudi Arabia who said that it was his eighth jihad,' a Dutch journalist said." ["U.S. Alarmed as Mujahidin Join Kosovo Rebels," *The Times* (London), 11/26/98]**

**"Diplomats in the region say Bosnia was the first bastion of Islamic power. The autonomous Yugoslav region of Kosovo promises to be the second. During the current rebellion against the Yugoslav army, the ethnic Albanians in the province, most of whom are Moslem, have been provided with financial and military support from Islamic countries. They are being bolstered by hundreds of Iranian fighters, or Mujahadeen, who infiltrate from nearby Albania and call themselves the Kosovo Liberation Army. US defense officials say the support includes that of Osama Bin Laden, the Saudi terrorist accused of masterminding the bombings of the US embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam. A Defense Department statement on August 20 said Bin Laden's Al Qa'ida organization supports Moslem fighters in both Bosnia and Kosovo. . . . The KLA strength was not the southern Kosovo region, which over the centuries turned from a majority of Serbs to ethnic Albanians. The KLA, however, was strong in neighboring Albania, which today has virtually no central government. The crisis in Albania led Iran to quickly move in to fill the vacuum. Iranian Revolutionary Guards began to train KLA members. . . . Selected groups of Albanians were sent to Iran to study that country's version of militant Islam. So far, Yugoslav officials and Western diplomats agree that millions of dollars have been funnelled through Bosnia and Albania to buy arms for the KLA. The money is raised from both Islamic governments and from Islamic communities in Western Europe, particularly Germany. . . . 'Iran has been active in helping out the Kosovo rebels,' Ephraim Kam, deputy director of Tel Aviv University's Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, said. 'Iran sees Kosovo and Albania as containing Moslem communities that require help and Teheran is willing to do it.' But much of the training of the KLA remains based in Bosnia. Intelligence sources say mercenaries and volunteers for the separatist movement have been recruited and paid handsome salaries. . . . The trainers and fighters in the KLA include many of the Iranians who fought in Bosnia in the early 1990s. Intelligence sources place their number at 7,000, many of whom have married Bosnian women. There are also Afghans, Algerians, Chechens, and Egyptians." ["Kosovo Seen as New Islamic Bastion," *Jerusalem Post*, 9/14/98]**

**". . . By late 1997, the Tehran-sponsored training and preparations of the Liberation Army of Kosovo (UCK -- Ushtria Clirimtare e Kosoves -- in Albanian, OVK in Serbian), as well as the transfer of weapons and experts via Albania, were being increased. Significantly, Tehran's primary objective in Kosovo has evolved from merely assisting a Muslim minority in distress to furthering the consolidation of the Islamic strategic axis along the Sarajevo-to-Tirane line. And only by expanding and escalating subversive and Islamist-political presence can this objective be attained. . . . In the Fall of 1997, the uppermost leadership in Tehran ordered the IRGC [Revolutionary Guards] High Command to launch a major program for shipping large quantities of weapons and other military supplies to the Albanian clandestine organisations in Kosovo. [The supreme Iranian spiritual leader, the Ayatollah] Khamene'i's instructions specifically stipulated that the comprehensive military assistance was aimed to enable the Muslims 'to achieve the independence' of the province of Kosovo. . . . [B]y early December 1997, Iranian intelligence had already delivered the first shipments of hand grenades, machine-guns, assault rifles, night vision equipment, and communications gear from stockpiles in Albania into Kosovo. The mere fact that**

**the Iranians could despatch the first supplies within a few days and in absolute secrecy reflect extensive advance preparations made in Albania in anticipation for such instructions from Tehran. Moreover, the Iranians began sending promising Albanian and UCK commanders for advanced military training in al-Quds [special] forces and IRGC camps in Iran. Meanwhile, weapons shipments continue. Thus, Tehran is well on its way to establishing a bridgehead in Kosovo. . . . The liberation army was to be only the first phase in building military power. Ultimately, the Kosovo Albanians must field such heavy weapons as tanks, armoured personnel carriers, artillery, and rocket launchers, if they hope to evict the Serbian forces from Kosovo. . . . The spate of UCK terrorism during the Fall of 1997, . . . should be considered intentional provocations against the Serbian police aimed to elicit a massive retaliation that would in turn lead to a popular uprising. Thus, the ongoing terrorism campaign in Kosovo should be considered the initial phases in implementing the call for an uprising. Iran-sponsored activists have already spread the word through Kosovo that the liberation war has already broken out. If current trends prevail, the increasingly Islamist UCK will soon become the main factor in overturning the long-term status quo in the region. Concurrently, the terrorist activities have become part of everyday life throughout Kosovo. Given the extent of the propaganda campaign and the assistance provided by Iran, the spread of terrorism should indeed be considered the beginning of an armed rebellion that threatens a major escalation."** ["Italy Becomes Iran's New Base for Terrorist Operations," by Yossef Bodansky, *Defense and Foreign Affairs Strategic Policy* (London), February 1998. Bodansky is Director of the House Congressional Task Force on Terrorism and Unconventional Warfare. This report was written in late 1997, before the KLA's offensive in early 1998.]

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