

VIENNA, 5 JUNE 1992

REPORT OF
THE CSCE CONFLICT PREVENTION CENTRE
FACT-FINDING MISSION TO KOSOVO

Introduction

The Committee of Senior Officials of the CSCE decided on 20 May 1992 to request the Consultative Committee of the Conflict Prevention Centre to dispatch a fact-finding mission to determine the military situation in Kosovo.

On 23 May the Consultative Committee of the CPC requested the Chairman of the Consultative Committee to organise and supervise the mission.

The mission was led by Ambassador David Peel of Canada and included members from the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic, Denmark, France, the Netherlands, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and a (Spanish) representative from the Secretariat of the CPC. (List of participants: Annex I.)

The fact-finding mission made contact with the Vice-Chairman of the Conference on Yugoslavia and with the Chief of Staff of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) in Yugoslavia.

The mission visited Belgrade on 27 May 1992 and Kosovo from 28 May to 2 June 1992. The mission met with representatives of the Federal Government and of the Government of the Republic of Serbia and with representatives of political parties and ethnic groups. It met with representatives of the Yugoslav Army (YA), Air Force and Militia (police). The mission also had considerable contact with ordinary citizens. (See Annex II.)

During its time in Kosovo, the mission visited all military garrisons, most military training areas and several other installations, including border checkpoints with Albania. It visited all significant centres of population and several other settlements. Helicopter flights gave the mission the opportunity to cover the whole territory.

Section I: Background

Kosovo is situated in the southern part of Yugoslavia and covers an area of 10,887 sq km. The population of Kosovo, approximately two million, is ethnically mixed: Albanians, Serbs, Montenegrins, Muslims, Turks and others. Albanians are approximately 90 percent of the population; they have one of the highest birth rates in Europe.



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The Serbs see Kosovo as the cradle of the Serbian Orthodox church and the Serbian State. The Albanians claim to be the direct descendants of the Illyrians, and to have inhabited the Kosovo area since before the arrival of the Serbs and others.

After the First World War and the break-up of the Ottoman empire, frontiers were re-established and Kosovo became part of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (Yugoslavia) in 1921. In 1944 the Federal Yugoslav authorities established the autonomous region of Kosovo-Metohija (Kosovo). The Federal Yugoslav Constitution of 1974 gave Kosovo the status of an autonomous province within Serbia. Kosovo was represented in the Collective Presidency, in the Federal Government and in the Federal Parliament.

In 1981, demonstrations by ethnic Albanians for the status of republic in Yugoslavia led to serious riots in Kosovo. In 1989 the Republic of Serbia suspended Kosovo's status as an autonomous province; this led to further riots. In 1990 ethnic Albanian members of the parliament of Kosovo proclaimed a Republic of Kosovo. The parliament of the Republic of Serbia responded by dissolving the parliament in Kosovo and by suspending local administration, including the police. These functions have since been carried out by Serbian authorities.

In the autumn of 1990 the dissolved ethnic Albanian parliament met and adopted a new constitution which declared Kosovo's independence. A referendum arranged by the ethnic Albanians in 1991 overwhelmingly supported Kosovo's independence. This independence has not been achieved, but in elections on 24 May 1992, arranged by the ethnic Albanians and not prevented by the Serbian authorities although they deemed them illegal, Dr. Ibrahim Rugova, who was unopposed, was elected president and a parliament was also elected. Ethnic Albanians refused to participate in the general election in Serbia on 31 May 1992.

Section II: Contacts and Perceptions

Throughout their discussions with the mission, Federal and Serbian authorities stressed the importance of Kosovo in Serbian history. Federal Government representatives said they could not accept Kosovo becoming independent or joining Albania. Military authorities described a dangerous security situation in Kosovo, including a possible threat of interference from outside. Serbian authorities emphasised that Kosovo was part of Serbia, that the ethnic Albanians are a minority in Serbia, and that boundaries could not be changed; Serbia would defend the integrity of its territory, which is as important as that of any other country. They stressed that Albanians could have the same rights as any other Yugoslav citizen. They noted that offers had been made to the Albanians in Kosovo to negotiate greater autonomy but no response had been received. The Serbians said that a conflict would arise in Kosovo if a separatist movement became more active, noting that there is no internationally recognized right to secession. They stressed that any further moves by the Albanians to establish institutions would also fuel the conflict. Some said the Albanian population is well armed (a condition they

admitted was common in the Balkans). The situation in Kosovo was described by one authority as a pre-conflict state of affairs.

Representatives of the ethnic Albanians, on the other hand, told the mission that they wanted an independent Kosovo and that they would be prepared to negotiate with the Serbs, but the Serbs refused to talk on this basis. Albanians insisted that they have always been discriminated against and that they do not have equal rights, thus they refuse to participate in Serbian institutions, such as political bodies, administration, army and police. Those institutions, they said, are not theirs. They insisted that the army, the police and indeed many Serbian civilians are armed while Albanians are not; as a result, their opposition could only be civil disobedience. They said that the Militia not only searches their cars and homes but uses various other forms of harassment. Kosovo remains, in their opinion, the most dangerous area in Yugoslavia. They feared the Serbs would eventually try to create an armed conflict to force the Albanians out of Kosovo. If started, it would produce a massacre and vast numbers of refugees. Some of the Albanian representatives were particularly concerned about the Serbian reaction when their newly elected parliament meets. They said that they still think a political solution is possible and hoped that Europe will do something to help them.

Representatives of other ethnic groups described the situation as tense and confusing. In their view, the ethnic Albanians had decided to try to use a patient and democratic route to change, but they thought that the Serbs would never allow their demands. They feared that the situation could lead to armed conflict.

Section III: The Military Situation

The aspects of the military situation in Kosovo which the fact-finding mission investigated covered the land forces, the air forces and the Militia. The fact-finding mission had detailed discussions at command level, and visited barracks and installations, observed training at close hand and inspected military and Militia equipment. The relevant military and Militia authorities cooperated fully with the fact-finding mission. The army provided the mission with a helicopter, with no restrictions as to where it could fly or land. Territorial Defence, because it was abolished in 1992, was not a concern of the fact-finding mission.

1. The Yugoslav Army in Kosovo

- a. The YA in Kosovo consists of the 52nd Corps, which has the primary task of defending the Kosovo plateau. The main military threat is seen in terms of airborne/air-landed forces on the Kosovo plateau or from a land attack into the area. The peacetime mission is to secure borders and to protect military installations. The fact-finding mission was given the detailed composition of the Corps and was allowed to verify this information.
- b. A tank brigade has recently been repositioned from the former Socialist Republic of Macedonia and placed under the command of 52nd Corps. This

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tank brigade was withdrawn to Kosovo in accordance with agreements between Serbia and Macedonia. The tank brigade is fully equipped, but is manned with only 15 percent of its normal peacetime strength. This repositioning has entailed some troop redeployment within the region, including the reactivation of an empty barracks.

- c. The strength of the Corps was reported to the fact-finding mission as 4000 regular personnel and conscripts and 1200 military reservists. It is manned at 40 to 50 percent of its normal peacetime strength; the reasons for this were explained as the lack of response to conscription by ethnic Albanians and because conscripts from the newly independent republics were no longer available. Consequently most of the conscripts are from outside Kosovo. Comparative personnel strengths for 52nd Corps for past years were given, in writing, as follows:

1988	-	11,800
1991	-	7,913
1992	-	5,200

- d. Conscripts are recruited at the age of 19, and serve for a period of about 12 months. On leaving the army, conscripts become reservists with an annual call-up liability for training up to four weeks. Some are allocated to the Militia as reservists, the majority remain reservists of the armed forces. Because of manpower shortages, both conscripts and reservists are now called up more frequently, six times per year rather than twice. The mission was told that the reservists keep their uniform at home but weapons were not issued.
- e. The Corps has, in total, approximately 200 tanks, mechanized and motorized infantry and normal combat support. The equipment is located in garrisons.
- f. Given the general situation in the country, some efforts have been made to provide or improve the basic protection of army barracks by building earth banks and constructing trenches; barracks were guarded by sentries.
- g. The Corps was reported to be at a normal state of combat readiness which means that troops had not been reinforced and peacetime duties were being carried out according to normal plans. The mission saw nothing to contradict this. The fact-finding mission had the opportunity to visit training drills (i.e. shooting, fieldcraft and weapon training). Engineer units were reported to be used in the construction of civilian roads and water supply for villages.

Conclusions:

- a. The fact-finding mission saw no military movements other than normal low level routine transportation. The repositioning of the troops from Macedonia, the improvement of the basic protection of some barracks, the increased frequency in recruitment of conscripts, the additional call-up of reservists, and

the transportation of conscripts into and out of Kosovo, have been interpreted by some as constituting a higher level of military activity directed against the population. However, the fact-finding mission accepts that there is a logical explanation for each of these activities, and does not consider that they were undertaken specifically against the people of Kosovo.

- b. Visits to all barracks confirmed what the mission had been told about the state of their manning, equipment and training. The state of alert could be described as normal, and was demonstrably not high. Training was routine and the atmosphere in barracks and on training appeared relaxed. The impression gained was that the YA was conducting itself in a manner consistent with its role. Reinforcement would certainly be necessary before it could carry out its operational role. That said, there is sufficient manpower and equipment to deploy, without reinforcement, should the Corps be tasked with a secondary role in support of the civil power.

2. The Air Forces.

The Air Force in Kosovo, based on one air base near Pristina, is not subordinated to 52nd Corps. The fact-finding mission was told that the air component consists of a squadron of fighter-bombers with the role of air intercept. The air base is defended, including air defence, and is at a normal state of alert. Aircraft carried out missions involving about 10 to 12 flying days per month. The Air Force was reported to be manned at normal peacetime strength, whereas air defence and logistic elements were reported to be at 50 percent.

Conclusion:

The Air Force in Kosovo carries out normal military duties and tends not to feature highly in public concerns. Furthermore, because of the rapid availability of air power from outside Kosovo, the fact-finding mission considered the Air Force was not a factor which could be considered within the strict bounds of the military situation in Kosovo.

3. The Militia

- a. The Militia in Kosovo comes under the authority of the Serbian Ministry of Internal Affairs. It is responsible for internal security, investigation of criminal activity, the maintenance of law and order and other police duties, such as traffic control. The fact-finding mission was told that the visibility of the Militia on the roads had been increased as a preventive measure, particularly given police concern about the high number of unregistered weapons.
- b. The mission was told that the Militia consists of about 2500 men in the active force, and about the same number of reservists on which to call; 10 to 15 percent of reservists are called up at any one time, for short periods, to provide support for the regulars. The mission could not, of course, verify these figures

but it heard no contradictory allegations. By way of contrast, officials said that in 1990 the Militia was 7000 strong, but had no reservists. It was explained that the difference in manning resulted from the withdrawal of Federal Militia troops and because a number of other nationalities left the service, in particular over 2000 Albanians when the local administration was suspended in 1990. The Militia in Kosovo is manned, therefore, predominantly by Serbs.

- c. The Militia is equipped with light vehicles, wheeled and tracked armoured personnel carriers (some with 14.7 mm machine guns), specialised riot control vehicles, light weapons and mortars. Militia vehicles and uniforms are blue; the Militia also has special forces who wear combat uniforms similar to army uniforms. Some Militia equipment and accommodation have, in the last two years, been situated within YA barracks. The Mission was told that this co-location was a matter of protection and logistic convenience, rather than an indication of close army-Militia cooperation.

Conclusions:

- a. In a tense and difficult situation, the Militia provides a very visible, and essentially Serbian, presence; they are omnipresent as a result of roadblocks and patrols, both mobile and static. The Militia exercises close control over the population. The Militia claims to act within the prevailing legal framework, but the impression gained by the mission is that its activities are seen by the majority of the population as oppressive and restricting individual freedoms. It is not surprising therefore that the Militia, rather than the army, is seen as the main cause of anxiety and instrument of intimidation. The fact-finding mission heard no suggestions that Militia activities had increased recently, and it appears that the present level of activity has been the norm for the past two years.
- b. Nevertheless, to the extent that the mission was able to form an impression, it seemed to be the general perception that there is often no clear distinction between the activities of the army and those of the Militia. This is possibly because of the similarity in uniforms of the Militia special forces and those of the army, reinforced by the fact that some Militia are accommodated within army barracks.

4. Unofficial Organisations and Arming of Individuals

It seems to be common knowledge that there are organisations throughout Serbia whose members are armed. Members of the Serbian community in Kosovo involved with these organisations are alleged to conduct shooting training overtly. However, the fact-finding mission has no evidence about these organisations.

The mission heard several allegations that weapons are being distributed to Serbians in Kosovo; a number of people said that they had seen this taking place.

According to Serbian authorities weapons had not been distributed, but they acknowledged that weapons were generally widespread among the population.

Conclusion:

While the fact-finding mission was unable to verify any assertions about the distribution of weapons to civilians, it gained the impression that certain members of the Serbian community enjoyed advantages in this respect that were not available to other communities.

Section IV: Comment

While the mandate of the mission was precisely defined, its members consider that the military situation must be seen comprehensively, within social, ethnic, economic and political circumstances. In the mission's view, it is at present not the military situation but the political situation that is the problem in Kosovo.

The main problem area is the relationship between the overwhelming Albanian population and the existing Serbian administration. The aim of the ethnic Albanians, who are refusing any direct contact with the Serbian authorities, is an independent Kosovo. The Federal and Serbian authorities insist that Kosovo must remain an integral part of Serbia. Both sides understand the seriousness of the circumstances and both told the mission that they recognize the need to proceed through negotiations, but their terms for beginning negotiations are far apart.

In carrying out its mandate, the fact-finding mission did not conclude that there is mounting military tension. But the situation is a dangerous one and, if conflict is to be avoided, it must be approached with great patience and good will. The mission hopes that all parties will maintain the utmost restraint and avoid acts that could lead to misunderstanding and violence.

Section V: Appreciations

The mission expresses its appreciation to the civil and military authorities in Belgrade and in Kosovo, and to the many individuals and representatives of political parties and ethnic groups, for their active cooperation and assistance. The mission also thanks the Government of France for the provision of an aircraft and the Royal Netherlands Embassy in Belgrade for the provision of a vehicle; both greatly facilitated its work. The mission thanks the Canadian Embassy in Belgrade for the use of its facilities. It expresses particular appreciation to the Chairman of the Consultative Committee of the CPC, Mr Erik Pierre, and Rear Admiral Göran Wallén of the Swedish delegation for their work in organising the mission.

Annex No. I to the
Report of the CSCE Conflict Prevention Centre Fact-Finding Mission to Kosovo

Mission Members:

Ambassador H. David Peel (Canada)	-	Mission Leader
Brigadier Richard F. Baly (UK)		
Mr. Javier Collar (Spain - CPC Secretariat)		
Sergeant-Major Roelof R.W. From (Netherlands)		
Colonel George Ledeuil (France)		
Ambassador Miroslav Polreich (CSFR)		
Brigadier-General Josef Schaerli (Switzerland)		
Colonel Falk Rye Vadmand (Denmark)		
Mr. Peter Taksøe-Jensen (Denmark)	-	liaison
Mr. Alexander Pavičić	-	Serbo-Croat interpreter
Mr. Mohammed Zakaria Khan	-	Albanian interpreter

Annex No. II to the
Report of the CSCE Conflict Prevention Centre Fact-Finding Mission to Kosovo

Partial list of persons visited by the Mission in Belgrade and Kosovo

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| Mr. Vladimir Sultanović | - Acting Federal Minister of Foreign Affairs |
| Mr. Četković | - Minister of Justice of Serbia |
| Mr. Dragan Ignjatijević | - Assistant to the Foreign Minister,
Republic of Serbia |
| Mr. Momcilo Trajković | - Representative of the Serbian Government
in Kosovo |

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| Colonel-General Zivota Panič | - Acting Defence Minister and Chief of the
General Staff of the Armed Forces |
| Lieutenant Colonel - General Vuković | - Chief of Staff, 3rd Military District |
| Major General Miroslav Radmanović | - Commander, 52nd Corps |
| Commander Sveto Djurdjević | - Commander of the Militia of Kosovo |

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| Dr. Ibrahim Rugova | - President Democratic League of Kosovo |
| Prof. Fehmi Agani | - Vice-president, Democratic League
of Kosovo |
| Dr. Alush A. Gashi | - Democratic League of Kosovo |
| Mr. Veton Surroi | - President, Parliamentary Party of Kosovo |