

Albanian gangs running Kosovo

By [Global Research](#)

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The mainstream media has acknowledged the criminalization of the Kosovo government. What they do not mention, however, is that “the criminal gangs” directly associated with the self proclaimed Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) were supported from the outset in 1999 by the US administration, NATO and the United Nations mission to Kosovo (UNMIK), which at the time was headed by General Michael Jackson.

Related article which documents the ties of the KLA to organised crime and the role of NATO

[Kosovo “Freedom Fighters” Financed by Organised Crime](#), by Michel Chossudovsky, May 1999

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Tom Walker, Pristina

April 11, 2006

KOSOVO, the former Yugoslav province, is falling into the grip of Albanian organised crime gangs, casting a shadow over attempts by the international community to turn it into a fully fledged independent state by the end of this year.

Participants in talks in Vienna, sponsored by the UN, on the “final status” of Kosovo, are concerned that the mafia networks that smuggled guns into the disputed province from Albania in 1997 and 98 are using the same channels for a burgeoning trade in illicit petrol, cigarettes and cement. Prostitution and drugs are also popular staples of the black economy.

The profits are ploughed into shopping centres and hotels, which are going up as part of a building boom in the province. Petrol stations are especially popular - there are more than 2000 of them catering for a population of two million.

Many are believed to be part of a money-laundering racket, controlled by a few of the largest clan families, involving oil smuggled in from Montenegro.

Despite attempts by the head of the UN mission in Kosovo, Soren Jessen-Petersen, to downplay the extent of the problem, UN officials admit the corruption extends deep into the heart of the Kosovo Government.

“Crime groups have been able to operate with impunity,” said Marek Antoni Nowicki,

Poland's leading human rights lawyer and the UN's international ombudsman for Kosovo until last year.

"You have a criminal state in real power - it needs underground illegal structures to supply it with everything to survive.

"These networks can rely on the weakness of the public institutions to sanction their operations."

The UN's internal watchdog, the Office of Internal Oversight, accused Mr Jessen-Petersen on Friday of turning a blind eye to widespread fraud at Pristina airport. He said the report was "entirely unwarranted".

Kosovo is still technically part of Serbia, and Serbian Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica argues that Belgrade must retain some form of control.

The fight against corruption is complicated by the fact that the task is shared between different bodies of varying degrees of competence.

"The aim is to keep the criminals under control," Mr Nowicki said. "The question is: can the international community do it? It is very doubtful."

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