

Kosovo and Albania: Dirty Work in the Balkans: NATO's KLA Frankenstein

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The U.S. and German-installed leadership of Kosovo finds itself under siege after the Council of Europe voted Tuesday to endorse a [report](#) charging senior members of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) of controlling a brisk trade in human organs, sex slaves and narcotics.

Coming on the heels of a retrial later this year of KLA commander and former Prime Minister, Ramush Haradinaj, by the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in The Hague, an enormous can of worms is about to burst open.

Last month, [Antifascist Calling](#) reported that Hashim Thaçi, the current Prime Minister of the breakaway Serb province, and other members of the self-styled Drenica Group, were accused by Council of Europe investigators of running a virtual mafia state.

According to Swiss parliamentarian Dick Marty, the Council's Special Rapporteur for Human Rights, Thaçi, Dr. Shaip Muja, and other leading members of the government directed-and profited from-an international criminal enterprise whose tentacles spread across Europe into Israel, Turkey and South Africa.

For his part, Thaçi has repudiated the allegations and has threatened to sue Marty for libel. Sali Berisha, Albania's current Prime Minister and Thaçi's close ally, dismissed the investigation as a "completely racist and defamatory report," according to [The New York Times](#).

That's rather rich coming from a politician who held office during the systematic looting of Albania's impoverished people during the "economic liberalization" of the 1990s.

At the time, Berisha's Democratic Party government urged Albanians to invest in dodgy pyramid funds, massive Ponzi schemes that were little more than fronts for drug money laundering and arms trafficking.

More than a decade ago, [Global Research](#) analyst Michel Chossudovsky documented how the largest fund, "VEFA Holdings had been set up by the Guegue 'families' of Northern Albania with the support of Western banking interests," even though the fund "was under investigation in Italy in 1997 for its ties to the Mafia which allegedly used VEFA to launder large amounts of dirty money."

By 1997, two-thirds of the Albanian population who believed fairy tales of capitalist prosperity spun by their kleptocratic leaders and the IMF, lost some \$1.2 billion to the well-connected fraudsters. When the full extent of the crisis reached critical mass, it sparked an armed revolt that was only suppressed after the UN Security Council deployed some 7,000

NATO troops that occupied the country; more than 2,000 people were killed.

Today the Berisha regime, like their junior partners in Pristina, face a new legitimacy crisis.

As the [World Socialist Web Site](#) reported, mass protests broke out in Tirana last week, with more than 20,000 demonstrators taking to the streets, after a nationally broadcast report showed a Deputy Prime Minister from Berisha's party "in secretly taped talks, openly negotiating the level of bribes to back the construction of a new hydroelectric power station."

As is the wont of gangster states everywhere, "police responded with extreme violence against the demonstrators; three people died and dozens were injured."

While the charges against Thaçi and his confederates are shocking, evidence that these horrific crimes have been known for years, and suppressed, both by the United Nations Interim Administration in Kosovo (UNMIK) and by top American and German officials—the political mandarins pulling Balkan strings—lend weight to suspicions that a protective wall was built around their protégés; facts borne out by subsequent NATO investigations, also suppressed.

Leaked Military Intelligence Reports

On Monday, a series of NATO reports were leaked to [The Guardian](#). Military intelligence officials, according to investigative journalist Paul Lewis, identified Kosovo Prime Minister Hashim Thaçi as one of the "'biggest fish' in organised crime in his country."

Marked "Secret" by NATO spooks, Lewis disclosed that the 2004 reports also "indicate that the US and other western powers backing Kosovo's government have had extensive knowledge of its criminal connections for several years."

According to *The Guardian*, the files, tagged "'USA KFOR' ... provide detailed information about organised criminal networks in Kosovo based on reports by western intelligence agencies and informants," and also "identify another senior ruling politician in Kosovo as having links to the Albanian mafia, stating that he exerts considerable control over Thaçi, a former guerrilla leader."

As noted above, with the Council of Europe demanding a formal investigation into charges that Thaçi's criminal enterprise presided over a grisly traffic in human organs and exerted "violent control" over the heroin trade, it appears that the American and German-backed narco statelet is in for a very rough ride.

In the NATO reports, *The Guardian* revealed that Thaçi "is identified as one of a triumvirate of 'biggest fish' in organised criminal circles."

"So too," Lewis writes, "is Xhavit Haliti, a former head of logistics for the KLA who is now a close ally of the prime minister and a senior parliamentarian in his ruling PDK party."

The reports suggest "that behind his role as a prominent politician, Haliti is also a senior organised criminal who carries a Czech 9mm pistol and holds considerable sway over the prime minister."

Described as "'the power behind Hashim Thaçi', one report states that Haliti has strong ties

with the Albanian mafia and Kosovo's secret service, known as KShiK."

The former KLA logistics specialist, according to *The Guardian*, suggest that Haliti "'more or less ran' a fund for the Kosovo war in the late 1990s, profiting from the fund personally before the money dried up. 'As a result, Haliti turned to organised crime on a grand scale,' the reports state'."

Such information was long known in Western intelligence and political circles, especially amongst secret state agencies such as the American CIA, DEA and FBI, Germany's Bundesnachrichtendienst, or BND, Britain's MI6 and Italy's military-intelligence service, SISMI, as Marty disclosed last month.

In 1994 for example, [The New York Times](#) reported that the Observatoire Géopolitique des Drogues released a report documenting that "Albanian groups in Macedonia and Kosovo Province in Serbia are trading heroin for large quantities of weapons for use in a brewing conflict in Kosovo."

According to the *Times*, "Albanian traffickers were supplied with heroin and weapons by mafia-like groups in Georgia and Armenia. The Albanians then pay for the supplies by reselling the heroin in the West."

A year later, [Jane's Intelligence Review](#) reported that "if left unchecked ... 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."

Following NATO's 1999 bombing campaign that completed the sought-after break-up of Yugoslavia, that situation came to pass; Kosovo has since metastasized into a key link in the international narcotics supply chain.

NATO spooks averred that Haliti is "highly involved in prostitution, weapons and drugs smuggling" and that he serves as Thaçi's chief "political and financial adviser," and, according to the documents, he is arguably "the real boss" in the relationship.

Like Haradinaj, Haliti "is linked to the alleged intimidation of political opponents in Kosovo and two suspected murders dating back to the late 1990s, when KLA infighting is said to have resulted in numerous killings," Lewis reports.

In 2008, Haradinaj and Idriz Balaj were acquitted by the U.S.-sponsored ICTY "victors tribunal" of charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity. Lahi Brahimaj, Haradinaj's uncle, was sentenced to six years' imprisonment for the torture of two people at KLA headquarters.

A retrial was ordered last summer after evidence emerged that Haradinaj, long-suspected of running a parallel organized crime ring to Thaçi's that also trafficked arms, drugs and sexual slaves across Europe, a fact long-known-and similarly suppressed-by the mafia state's closest allies, Germany and the United States, may have intimidated witnesses who had agreed to testify against his faction of the KLA leadership.

A former nightclub bouncer who morphed into a "freedom fighter" during the 1990s, Haradinaj has been accused by prosecutors of crimes committed between March and

September 1998 in the Dukagjin area of western Kosovo.

According to [The Guardian](#), “Haradinaj was a commander of the KLA in Dukagjin, Balaj was the commander of the Black Eagles unit within the KLA, and Brahimaj a KLA member stationed in the force’s headquarters in the town of Jablanica.”

The appeals court ruled that “in the context of the serious witness intimidation that formed the context of the trial, it was clear that the trial chamber seriously erred in failing to take adequate measures to secure the testimony of certain witnesses.”

The indictment charges that the KLA “persecuted and abducted civilians thought to be collaborating with Serbian forces in the Dukagjin area and that Haradinaj, Balaj, and Brahimaj were responsible for abduction, murder, torture and ethnic cleansing of Serbs, Roma and fellow Albanians through a joint criminal enterprise, including the murder of 39 people whose bodies were retrieved from a lake,” *The Guardian* disclosed.

But in a case that demonstrates the cosy relations amongst KLA leaders and their Western puppetmasters despite, or possibly *because* of their links to organized crime, [German Foreign Policy](#) revealed that “high ranking UN officials helped intimidate witnesses due to testify in The Hague against Haradinaj.”

This charge was echoed by Special Rapporteur Dick Marty. He told [Center for Investigative Reporting](#) journalists Michael Montgomery and Altin Raxhimi, who broke the Kosovo organ trafficking story two years ago, that his investigation “could be hindered by witness safety and other security concerns.”

“If, as a witness, you do not have complete assurance that your statements will be kept confidential, and that as a witness you are truly protected, clearly you won’t talk to these institutions,” Marty said.

Such problems are compounded when the leading lights overseeing Kosovo’s administration, Germany and the United States, have every reason to scuttle any credible investigation into the crimes of their clients, particularly when a serious probe would reveal their *own* complicity.

Eyes Wide Shut

The Haradinaj cover-up is just the tip of the proverbial iceberg.

According to *German Foreign Policy*, “the structures of organized crime in Kosovo, in which Haradinaj is said to play an important role, extend all the way to Germany. It is being reported that German government authorities prevented investigations of Kosovo Albanians residing in Germany.”

Investigative journalist Boris Kanzleiter told the left-leaning online magazine that the UN administration in Kosovo (UNMIK) and its newest iteration, the European Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) “maintains very close ties to Haradinaj.”

The former head of UNMIK, Sören Jessen-Petersen, referred to him as a “close partner and friend.” Kanzleiter said that “Jessen-Petersen’s successor, the German diplomat, Joachim Ruecker, also has a close relationship to him.”

Kanzleiter told the journal, “accusations were made that high-ranking UNMIK functionaries were directly involved in the intimidation of witnesses.”

These reports should be taken seriously, especially in light of allegations that even before Haradinaj’s first trial, a witness against the former Prime Minister was killed in what was then described as “an unsolved auto accident.”

“Back in 2002,” *German Foreign Policy* reported, “three witnesses and two investigating officials were assassinated in the context of the trial against Haradinaj’s clan.”

Similar to the modus operandi of Thaçi’s enterprise, the newsmagazine reported that the BND had concluded that Haradinaj’s “network of [drugs and arms] smugglers were operating ‘throughout the Balkans’, extending ‘into Greece, Italy, Switzerland and all the way to Germany’.”

Not that any of this mattered to Germany or the United States. *German Foreign Policy* also reported that despite overwhelming evidence of KLA links to the global drugs trade, political circles in Berlin vetoed official investigations into KLA narcotics trafficking.

In 2005 “the State Offices of Criminal Investigation of Bavaria and Lower Saxony tried to convince the Federal Office of Criminal Investigation to open a centralized investigation concerning the known [Kosovo-Albanian] clans and individuals in Germany” because “many criminal culprits from the entourage of the KLA have settled in Germany.”

The author noted “this demand was refused.” Indeed, “even though the Austrian Federal Office of Investigation and the Italian police strongly insisted that their German colleagues finally initiate these investigations, the rejection ... according to a confidential source in the Austrian Federal Office of Criminal Investigation, came straight from the Interior Ministry in Berlin.”

As we have since learned, Haliti and other top KLA officials have also been linked to organized crime in Marty’s report. The human rights Rapporteur accused Haliti, like Haradinaj, of having ordered “assassinations, detentions, beatings and interrogations” of those who ran afoul of Thaçi’s underworld associates.

In 2009, [German Foreign Policy](#) reported yet another “new scandal” threatened to upset the apple cart. “A former agent of the Kosovo intelligence service explained that a close associate of Kosovo’s incumbent Prime Minister, Hashim Thaçi, had commissioned the assassinations of political opponents.”

“The newest mafia scandal involving Pristina’s secessionist regime was set in motion by the former secret agent Nazim Bllaca,” the magazine disclosed.

According to the publication, “Bllaca alleges that he had been in the employ of the secret service, SHIK, since the end of the war waged against Yugoslavia in 1999 by NATO and the troops of Kosovo’s terrorist UCK [KLA] militia.”

The former secret state agent claimed “he had personally committed 17 crimes in the course of his SHIK activities, including extortion, assassination, assaults, torture and serving as a contract killer.”

Marty told the *Center for Investigative Reporting* that “Bllaca’s experience did not bode well

for other insiders who are considering cooperating with the authorities.” EULEX officials only placed Bllaca under protective custody a week after he went public with his allegations, in what could only be described as an open-ended invitation for an assassin’s bullet.

Despite such revelations, diplomatic cables unearthed by WikiLeaks show that the U.S. Embassy views their Frankenstein creations in an entirely favorable light.

A Cablegate file dated 02-17-10, “Kosovo Celebrates Second Anniversary with Successes and Challenges,” 10PRISTINA84, informs us that “two years have seen political stability that has allowed the country to create legitimate new institutions,” but that the narco state “must use its string of economic reforms and privatizations as a springboard to motivate private-sector growth.”

Such as auctioning-off the Trepca mining complex at fire-sale prices. As [The New York Times](#) reported back in 1998, the Trepca mines are “the most valuable piece of real estate in the Balkans, worth at least \$5 billion.”

Summing up the reasons for NATO’s war, one mine director told *Times’* reporter Chris Hedges: “The war in Kosovo is about the mines, nothing else. This is Serbia’s Kuwait-the heart of Kosovo. We export to France, Switzerland, Greece, Sweden, the Czech Republic, Russia and Belgium.

“We export to a firm in New York, but I would prefer not to name it. And in addition to all this Kosovo has 17 billion tons of coal reserves. Naturally, the Albanians want all this for themselves.”

Judging by the flood of heroin reaching European and North American “markets,” one can only conclude that if fleets of armored Mercedes and BMWs prowling Pristina streets are a growth metric then by all means, America and Germany’s “nation building” enterprise has been a real achievement!

In light of reports of widespread criminality that would make a Wall Street hedge fund manager blush, we’re told by the U.S. Embassy that the Thaçi government “must prioritize the rule of law and the fight against corruption.”

Laying it on thick, despite damning intelligence reports by their own secret services, the Embassy avers that “Kosovo’s independence has been a success story.” Indeed, “the international community and the Kosovars, themselves, can feel good about the positive steps that have occurred over the past two years.”

That is, if one closes one’s eyes when stepping over the corpses.

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