

**Fact Sheet on Reforms to the Kosovo Security Force
27 March 2017**

The Government of Kosovo has proposed in early March draft legislation to upgrade the Kosovo Security Force (KSF) with more competencies to become a legitimate armed force for the country's defense. The Department of State has criticized Kosovo's effort as unconstitutional in nature, and as recently as March 22, threatened to withdraw IMET training and financial assistance to the KSF, suspend US exchanges and visits with the KSF, and refuse to support Kosovo's efforts to gain membership in various international organizations unless the Government immediately withdraws the legislation. The State Department continues to insist that Kosovo reform the KSF only through a constitutional amendment process, which would essentially provide a veto to Serbian opposition parties effectively controlled by Belgrade.

- The legislative effort in the Kosovo Assembly is fully constitutional. Article 126 of the Kosovo constitution provides specifically that the competencies and structure of the KSF shall be set out through law, and not by the constitution itself. The draft law takes up this constitutional charge, and fulfills it via a wholly democratic process and vote in the National Assembly.
- The State Department inexplicably continues to demand Kosovo reform the KSF only through a constitutional amendment. Despite the legality of the draft legislation, State officials have insisted Kosovo pursue a constitutional amendment to achieve military reform. This process, which would require double majorities of all parties in the National Assembly, would provide effective veto power to minority Serbian political parties. These parties are effectively controlled by Belgrade. This week, Serbian PM Vucic has publicly directed these ostensibly Kosovar parties to oppose the draft legislation in the Kosovo Assembly. Following months of provocations aimed at undercutting Kosovo's independence, Vucic on March 7 stated publicly that "Serbia will never agree with the formation of Kosovo's army."
- An expanded KSF will not threaten the balance of power in the Balkans. The transformation of the KSF from its current limited mission to a fully functional army will not materially offset the military advantage enjoyed by Serbia in the region. The expansion, planned to increase the KSF to 5,000 front line troops by 2025, would still be dwarfed by a Serbian force that already strands at 50,000 troops.
- NATO contributed to the design and planning of KSF expansion. NATO and the NATO Liaison Team in Kosovo played a significant role in drafting the plan for defense reform now being followed by the Government. NATO officers participated in and contributed to the drafting of the "Analysis of the Strategic Security Sector Review of Kosovo", published in 2014. The review established plans for the phased transition of the KSF to an armed force. The document anticipated completion of Phase 1 by the end of 2016, including all legislative changes necessary to complete the transformation. NATO participated in preparing the review after certifying, in 2013, that the KSF had become "fully operational" as a national security force under civilian control and was capable of carrying out all missions foreseen by its current mandate.
- Kosovo seeks to contribute more to its own defense and to NATO's efforts to defend regional security. Kosovo's leaders are engaged in a good faith effort to shoulder more of the burden of their own defense and to defend their sovereignty. This is a legacy issue of successive American administrations. Kosovo should enjoy firm support from the U.S. and the State Department in this specific effort to develop the KSF.

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