

# Operation of the Albanian Mafia in the Republic of Macedonia

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## **Purpose:**

Albanian mafia currently represents a threat to the entire Europe, while Macedonia, a country with a 25% Albanian minority, is one of the most threatened countries in Europe. In this article, we have elaborated in more detail the scope, vision and modus operandi of the Albanian mafia in human trafficking, illegal arms and drug trade in Europe, especially in Macedonia, a country that is considered one of the home countries of the Albanian mafia. The aim is to explain the transformation of the National liberation army (NLA) into Democratic Union for Integration (DUI) and investigate underlying interconnection between the NLA with the Albanian mafia.

## **Design/Methods/Approach:**

The methods employed include analysis of existing literature along with previously published interviews, certain statistical data, as well as opinions of people who have been interviewed in person due to their extensive experience in the fight against organized crime in Macedonia.

## **Findings:**

During the research, the actual condition regarding the impact of the Albanian mafia in Macedonia has been investigated, and it was concluded that, both in Macedonia and throughout Europe, there was a need for more rigorous treatment of the strategy how to deal with the mafia. The thesis that the NLA has direct links with the Albanian mafia has been proven.

## **Research Limitations/Implications:**

The main focus was on the progress of its activities in Macedonia, although the Albanian mafia operates on a far larger territory.

## **Practical Implications:**

This research emphasizes the actual state of operation of the Albanian mafia in several aspects, and provide a brief insight into their vision for the future. In addition, it could help significantly into the improvement of safety measures against the mafia's criminal activities.

## **Originality/Value:**

Due to the fact that any research regarding the operations of the Albanian mafia in Macedonia is crucial for the security in the region, there is hardly any made in this field.

**UDC: 343.9.02(497)**

**Keywords:** Albanian mafia, National Liberation Army (NLA), Democratic Union for Integration (DUI), Big Albania, transformation, Macedonia

## **Delovanje Albanske mafije v Republiki Makedoniji**

### **Namen prispevka:**

V današnjem času predstavlja Albanska mafija nevarnost celotni Evropi. V Makedoniji predstavljajo Albanci 25 odstotkov vsega prebivalstva, kar pomeni, da je Makedonija ena najbolj ogroženih držav v Evropi. V tem prispevku smo podrobneje analizirali obseg, vizijo in način delovanja Albanske mafije pri trgovini z ljudmi, orožjem in drogami v Evropi, še posebej v Makedoniji, ki velja za eno izmed matičnih držav Albanske mafije. Namen prispevka je bil razložiti preoblikovanje osvobodilne narodne vojske (ONV) v Demokratično unijo za integracijo (DUI) in raziskati osnovne povezave med ONV in Albansko mafijo.

### **Metode:**

Uporabljene metode so vključevale analizo obstoječe literature, objavljenih intervjujev in določenih statističnih podatkov ter mnenja oseb, ki so bile intervjuvane osebno na podlagi njihovih bogatih izkušenj v zvezi z bojem proti organizirani kriminaliteti v Makedoniji.

### **Ugotovitve:**

Med raziskovanjem dejanskega stanja vpliva Albanske mafije v Makedoniji je bilo ugotovljeno, da obstaja potreba po bolj strogi strategiji obravnave mafije tako v Makedoniji kot tudi v Evropi. Teza, da ima ONV neposredne vezi z Albansko mafijo, je bila potrjena.

### **Omejitve raziskave:**

Glavni poudarek je bil na širjenju aktivnosti mafije v Makedoniji, čeprav Albanska mafija deluje v precej širšem prostoru.

### **Praktična uporabnost:**

Raziskava obravnava dejansko stanje delovanja Albanske mafije z več vidikov in ponuja vpogled v njeno vizijo prihodnosti. Raziskava bi lahko pomembno pripomogla k izboljšanju varnostnih ukrepov proti kriminalnim dejavnostim mafije.

### **Izvirnost/pomembnost prispevka:**

Glede na dejstvo, da je to področje skorajda neraziskano, je kakršna koli raziskava o delovanju Albanske mafije v Makedoniji izrednega pomena za varnost v regiji.

**UDK: 343.9.02(497)**

**Ključne besede:** Albanska mafija, osvobodilna narodna vojska (ONV), Demokratična unija za integracijo (DUI), Velika Albanija, preoblikovanje, Makedonija

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The word *mafia* originates from Sicily and is used to refer to secret criminal organizations that have joined together in »families«, whose members are interconnected through ties of kinship or marriage. The mafia is a closed organization with precisely defined hierarchy and rules. Any violation of the rules is paid with one's life (Raufer & Quéré, 2006).

Finances are of crucial importance to the Mafia. So that they can achieve their goals, criminal families mainly rely on illegal activities. Illegal operations are the only method used by the mafia, because illegal activities are expensive and are not subject to taxation. Albanian criminal organizations are responsible for a number of different criminal activities. Regarding the illegal drug trade, the Albanian mafia is active in trafficking heroine, cocaine, synthetic drugs and cannabis. These groups have enormous financial resources that allow them to collaborate with other criminal organizations and deal with further illegal activities for the purpose of achieving greater material benefit (Europol, 2011).

The Albanian mafia is on the top of the world list of criminal organizations, and it has been active for a longer period. The genesis of the criminal development of the Albanian mafia comprises three stages, namely (Raufer & Quéré, 2006): delinquent predisposition (until the end of the eighties), creation of Mafia families out of the already existing and criminalized areas (early nineties), raising the level of professionalism in the Mafia and its expansion on larger territories (in the nineties).

According to Raufer and Quéré (2006), home countries of the Albanian mafia are the countries which form the so-called »Balkan golden triangle«: Albania, Kosovo and Macedonia. The former President of the Republic of Macedonia, Kiro Gligorov, in an interview in December 2000, said: »The generally accepted truth is that certain parts of the population - mostly Albanians, are involved in crime more than Macedonians.« Robert Hislope in his article »The Calm Before the Storm« (2001) says that ethnic Albanians, who make up from one quarter to one third of Macedonia's population, account for 50% of the serious crime done (according to Macedonian sources) and 80% of the prisoners (according to Albanian sources).

In 2001, Macedonia experienced a conflict initiated by the paramilitary Albanian organization NLA (National liberation army). Since then to the present, the focus has been on the Albanians as the main ones responsible for any form of organized crime in Macedonia.

## 2 ALBANIAN MAFIA IN EUROPE

The Albanian criminal network during the last decade, has grown into one of the most powerful mafia structures in the world. In many international reports, the Albanians were assessed as the ethnic group which outnumbers any other ethnical group when it comes to participants into the European organized crime. These assumptions have already proven in many EU countries. This organized Albanian group is also known to act together with other criminal groups in order to expand

their role and take full control of criminal activities in certain regions, such as human trafficking, illegal migration, trafficking in arms etc. The significance of the ethnic Albanian criminal groups in the entire European Union is rapidly increasing. Italy and Germany believe that ethnic Albanians head the largest criminal groups in the countries (Stojarova, 2007).

In November 2001, a report by Europol (Raufer, 2007) estimated that 40 percent of the heroin on the streets in Europe was sold by the Albanians. European intelligence services have identified 15 mafia clans operating in northern Albania and involved in smuggling heroin. The report "EU Organized Crime Threat Assessment [OCTA]" (Europol, 2011) says that Albanian criminal organizations have a significant role in the transport of cannabis in southeastern Europe. According to that report, the cannabis is grown in Albania and the region, and is then sent to Greece, Italy, Slovenia, Hungary and Turkey where it is traded for heroin, which is then distributed in Western Europe.

Much has been said by experts in the field of security in various European countries. An officer of an elite group of the Italian gendarmerie has said that ethnic Albanians are among the most dangerous dealers of drugs and weapons. These people are determined, ruthless and capable of the worst when it comes to achieving their goals. In 1999, John Abbott, director of the National Criminal Intelligence Service (NCIS) warned the public about the risk of infiltration of the Albanian mafia, which is well organized and operates with great cruelty. A prosecutor in Belgium has stated that the Albanian prostitution network is a form of organized crime which Belgium should be seriously concerned with (Raufer & Quéré, 2006). These are just some of the reactions of experts who are justly concerned by the method, the shape and scope of the criminal activities of Albanians in Europe.

Tome Batkovski<sup>1</sup> (personal interview, April 26, 2012) says that the reason for the large presence of the Albanian mafia in Europe is the great Albanian emigration after 1968. At that time they created installations which are being used by them even today. These installations underlie, for example, the criminal route which connects Turkey with Sweden, Belgium, Germany, Italy etc.

### 3 ACTIVITIES OF THE ALBANIAN MAFIA IN MACEDONIA

Marjan Nikolovski<sup>2</sup> (personal interview, April 24, 2012) states that, if the statistics of local illegal drugs and human trafficking cases are to be realized, the results would certainly indicate that the perpetrators in most of them are members of the Albanian ethnic community. This would be the case in the western part of Macedonia in particular, especially when speaking of illegal arms and human

<sup>1</sup> Tome Batkovski, Ph.D. is Professor at the Faculty of Security in Skopje and has a long experience in the Intelligence Agency of RM.

<sup>2</sup> Marjan Nikolovski is Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Safety in Skopje and a person with long years of experience in the Directorate for Safety and Counterintelligence of Macedonia.

trafficking. The same opinion is presented by Mitevski Zoran<sup>3</sup> (personal interview, May 25, 2012) who says that the Albanian mafia has great influence on the overall organized crime in Macedonia, which can be demonstrated by the number of closed and court cases proven by a final court judgment. According to Arsovska (2007) murders, abductions and women trafficking and sexual exploitation, are part of Macedonian day-to-day life. Ethnic Albanian perpetrators are said to be holding the responsibility for it.

### **3.1 The Connection of the Albanian Mafia with Human Trafficking in Macedonia**

The chaos in Albania, Kosovo and the parts of Macedonia where the Albanian language is spoken, has confirmed the leading role of ethnic Albanians in human trafficking (United Nations Office on Drug and Crime, 2008).

In an interview on the book *»Corruption and Financial Crime«* (Vaknin, 2010) Vladimir Danailov<sup>4</sup> says that since the conflict in 2001 until the present, all the attention is directed towards the Albanians as the main organizers of human trafficking in Macedonia. At that time certain parts of the country had no police control. This was especially true for the western parts where the population is mostly Albanian. These uncontrolled parts of the country provided the most favorable conditions for illegal activities performance, especially in bars whose owners were ethnic Albanians. Having analyzed the data obtained from the NGO *»Coalition for Fair Trials«*, Danailov says that in that period almost everyone who was charged with offenses related to human trafficking and prostitution was of Albanian nationality, while other ethnic groups appear as accomplices. According to Danailov, exactly these circumstances during and after the conflict contributed to the prevailing view that the ethnic Albanian population is particularly associated with this type of crime. Recent research by the IOM and the data provided by several NGOs including the *»Coalition All for Fair Trials«* show that the ethnic structure of criminals is as follows: 55% Albanians, Macedonians, 36% and 9% belong to other ethnic groups. This information is based on the charges and court cases in the field of human trafficking, migrant smuggling, organizing a criminal group and mediation of prostitution (Gotovski, 2011).

According to the NGO *»Coalition All for Fair Trials«* from the observed cases in 2005 (when most cases of human trafficking are noted) 73% of those convicted of the offense human trafficking belongs to people of Albanian nationality. Other than a single case where only Macedonians appear as perpetrators of crime, in all the rest people of Macedonian ethnicity appear only as accomplices (Gotovski, 2011).

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3 Zoran Mitevski is a pensioner who worked all his life in the Intelligence Service of Macedonia, who among others, was a deputy director in the Directorate for international terrorism and organized crime in the Intelligence Service.

4 Vladimir Danailov is currently employed in a Layers Office in Skopje, and in the period between 2000 and 2006 worked as a national director for legal matters in the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Skopje.

There is evidence that the victims are first traded in Kosovo and are later transported to Macedonia and then returned to Kosovo again (see, e.g. International organization for Migration [IOM], 2004). This »ping-pong method« confirms the fact that in this region there are multinational criminal organizations which were created by the Albanians from Kosovo and Albanian criminals from Macedonia.

### 3.2 The Influence of the Albanian Mafia to the Illegal Arms Trade in Macedonia

The state of anarchy in Albania and the conflict in Kosovo which later involved Macedonia as well, had a profound impact on the increased trade in arms in Macedonia. In 1997 in Albania, the police and military armories were raided, and hundreds of thousands of AK-47 and other small weapons ended up in the hands of ethnic Albanian rebel groups. According to the Albanian government, between 1997 and 2002 about 150,000 light weapons were illegally transferred from Albania, mainly to Macedonia and Kosovo. Most of these ended up in the hands of the Kosovo liberation army (KLA), Albanian national army (ANA) and National liberation army (NLA) (Arsovska & Kostakos, 2008). The amount of seized weapons and ammunition by international forces from 2001 to 2002 indicates that Albania was a key source of the Albanian fighters from Kosovo, many of whom crossed the southern border of Kosovo to participate in the conflict in Macedonia (Miloševska, 2009).

Despite the Albanian NLA rebel forces need for weapons to realize the conflict in Macedonia in 2001, there is more evidence that trade in weapons for terrorist purposes is still flourishing in Macedonia. In November 2007, the largest seizure of weapons ever by the Macedonian police took place. This occurred in the village Brodec, near Tetovo in Western Macedonia. In the action, which became known to the world public, 6 people were killed and 13 arrested (»Planinska bura« uništi kriminalna banda, 2007). The criminal group was led by the Albanian Lirim Jakupi-Nazi<sup>5</sup> who managed to escape to the police, being armed with highest military standards. The seized weapons were estimated to number enough to arm a battalion of 650 men (Sandevski, 2010). Three years later another large seizure of weapons by the Macedonian police took place. In this case four Albanians, three citizens of Macedonia and one Kosovo citizen with great criminal record were involved (Harun Aliu e četvrti od grupata kaj Raduša, 2010). What is common to both cases is that the so-called Albanian Liberation Army claimed responsibility on behalf of the guerillas, stating that »Albanians in Macedonia were forced to organize militarily in order to defend the Albanian people and their territory« (Ilievski, 2008: 17).

All the weapons seized in Macedonia in recent years according to T. Batkovski (personal interview, April 26, 2012) are insignificant with respect to the region in

5 Lirim Jakupi-Nazi in August 2007 also escaped to the guards in the Kosovo prison Dubrava where he was serving the sentence of 40 years imprisonment (Kuzmanovski, 2010).

which Macedonia stretches and considering how many illegal weapons are present in Macedonia, which originate from the conflict.

### **3.3 The connection between the Albanian drug mafia and Macedonia**

According to certain assumptions, the Albanian drug mafia controls the heroin route, which today has its own distribution centers in all countries. It represents a major concern for all European police departments and countries. The wars in the Balkans broke the previous Yugoslav channels for trafficking drugs from the Middle East to Europe, but after that the ambitious Albanians managed to open new distribution centers and new channels towards the West (Raufer & Quéré, 2006).

Some observers suggest an extreme view on the overall situation, arguing that the entire Albanian national movement is nothing but a front for a vast criminal operation. One such example is the French criminologist Xavier Raufer (2007), who argues that the only purpose of military operations led by the Liberation Army of Presevo, Medvedja, and Bujanovac (LAPMB) in southern Serbia and NLA in Macedonia was to keep open the paths of heroin. Raufer referred to the roads between southern Serbia and Macedonia that lead to Kosovo as the »Balkan Golden Triangle«. LAPMB and NLA, in Raufer's opinion are »representatives of a paramilitary wing of the Albanian mafia«. He even says that despite the lack of firm evidence, »there is no doubt that the offensive of Albanian terrorists is their desire to control the path of drugs«. Moreover, Raufer claims that there is no difference between the Albanian mafia and the Albanian paramilitary forces, adding further that paramilitary forces give their contribution at the battlefield, but also take advantage of such condition to organize heroin trafficking.

It is certain that with the help of closely related ethnic regions, the Albanians have a great advantage in the drug trade as compared to other nations. The highlands between Macedonia, Kosovo and Albania are poorly controlled and often used by the drug mafia (Raufer, 2007). The report OCTA (Europol, 2011) stated that Kosovo, Macedonia and Albania are particularly important locations where storage and repackaging of drugs takes place, and such drugs continue their way to western European countries. Lately, the number of members who are nationals of the Republic of Macedonia in the structure of the ethnic Albanian criminal groups dealing specifically with trafficking heroin and cocaine, has increased (Europol, 2011).

Anastasijevic (2006) sees that although Kosovo is further on the South from the traditional Balkan route, it is ideal for storage of drugs smuggled from Macedonia, which can then be repacked and sent to the west through Serbia or Montenegro. This, and the presence of great Diaspora of ethnic Albanians in Turkey, Austria, Germany and Switzerland makes the ethnic Albanians dominant force in the European drug trade.

Ivan Babanovski (Raufer & Quéré, 2006) states that the centers of drug trafficking in Macedonia are Gostivar, Kumanovo and Skopje, where the branch

of the Albanian mafia is situated. According to the information based on his intelligence work, untreated drugs are transported from Macedonia to Kosovo and Albania where it is processed. Since Kosovo is land-locked and set somewhat out of main international highways' reach, Albanian drug lords have to work closely with their Macedonian, Serbian, and Bulgarian partners in order to move the shipments towards their western destinations (Anastasijevic, 2006).

#### 4 DIRECT CONNECTIONS OF THE NLA WITH THE MAFIA

The Republic of Macedonia in 2001 was facing one of the most serious threats to its sovereignty and territorial integrity, caused by the open aggression of the well-organized and armed paramilitary group called NLA. Ivan Babanovski (2002: 201) defines NLA as »a terrorist organization which by using organized violence, terror, kidnapping and intimidation is trying to change the constitutional order in the Republic, to jeopardize its security, achieving its goal through the conquest of territory«.

Despite the fact that during the conflict the leaders of NLA claimed that they caused the conflict in order to get more rights for the Albanian population in Macedonia, Tome Batkovski (personal interview, April 26, 2012) says that the initial purpose of NLA was the »liberation of occupied Albanian territories«. Later under the influence of Western powers, the goal was changed to a request for greater rights for Albanians. He says that the most popular thing which comes as a surprise lately is that the idea of »ethnic Albania« is now referred to as »Natural Albania«. It was promoted in 2009 by Professor Koco Danaj in Tirana, Albania, with several stages of its creation.

The paramilitary criminal organization NLA between February and November 2001, fully occupies the north-western border of Macedonia where Macedonia borders Kosovo and Albania. Many experts interested into the matter (Babanovski, 2002; Daskalovski, 2004; Raufer & Quéré, 2006), agree on the thesis that a major role in the creation and functioning of the NLA was played by the interest of some Albanian political leaders in Kosovo, Albania and Macedonia, who has publicly encouraged the idea of creating a so-called »Great Albania« and they also provided financial and political support to NLA. Their interest in this action, as Daskalovski (2004) and Babanovski (2002) said, would be the profit from the criminal activities, which occurred at that time in that region and would be interrupted with the reinstatement of control by the Macedonian police forces in that area. Certain intelligence research data show that the criminal network, which operated in the region of Kosovo, southern Serbia and northwestern Macedonia and Albania, dealt primarily with trafficking in drugs, weapons, cigarettes and people and represent one of the key links in the supply of goods from Asia Minor to Europe (Daskalovski, 2004).

A report of the United Nations Office on Drug and Crime (2008) says that in the early 1990s, the village of Tanusevci, where the conflict actually began in 2001, was the main channel for arms for KLA. The report gives particular importance to the occupation of Arachinovo, which is located 10 km from Skopje, the capital city



of Macedonia. According to a report, during this period Arachinovo turned into »a hotbed of Albanian mafia activities«. Moreover, it clearly indicates that some NLA commanders were Mafia bosses.

The headquarters of the so called NLA was led by Ermush Xemali, Ali Ahmeti (political representative), Fazli Veliu, responsible for the Diaspora and Gezim Ostreni, chief military commander. Ali Ahmeti is a Macedonian with Albanian ethnic origin who during his studies participated in the Albanian separatist movement in Kosovo for which he was imprisoned for a year (European Stability Initiative, 2008). According to Professor T. Batkovski (personal interview, April 26, 2012), such separatist movement was closely linked to Enver Hoxha, the leader of the Albanian Party of Labor, whose program had nothing to do with civic democracy. According to him it is a classic Stalinist internal democracy when there were many attacks on socialism in the former Yugoslavia and all those in nationalist terms were supporters of ethnic Albania. His uncle Fazli Veliju was arrested by the German police for terrorist activities. He also had close ties with the Kosovo mafia clan »Jashari« a clan which is connected with Hashim Thaci, the Prime Minister of Kosovo, while Gezim Ostreni was a senior official in the KLA, Kosovo. Other than that Babanovski (2002), while treating NLA, says that the longtime boss of the Secret Service of Hashim Thaci was Ermush Xemali, one of the most mysterious characters on the entire scene, who is thought to have excellent relations with the Albanians of Macedonia and extremists in the valley of Presevo. Such close relations between the NLA and KLA members, set the ground for assumptions that NLA was created following the KLA example, whose leader was Kosovo Prime Minister Hashim Thaci as well as the fact that NLA is »paramilitary wing« of the Albanian mafia.

## **5 TRANSFORMATION OF NLA INTO THE POLITICAL PARTY DUI**

The similarities between Kosovo's KLA and NLA refer not only to their structure and function but also to their form of »transformation«. After the conflict and dissolution of the KLA in Kosovo, Hashim Thaci founded the political party named »Democratic Party of Kosovo« and won the elections in Kosovo on 17 November 2007, becoming the Prime Minister (Hashim Tachi, 2008). Ali Ahmeti, the leader of NLA, only a year after the conflict in Macedonia on June 5, 2002 founded a party named »Democratic Party of Integration«. There is no difference between the leadership of NLA and DUI, Ali Ahmeti who was the leader of NLA, became leader of DUI. People closest to the NLA occupied the highest positions in the party, namely Musa Xhaferi, a senior military commander, became general secretary of the party, while Fazli Veliu, the uncle of Ali Ahmeti and senior commander of the NLA became vice president of DUI (Taleski, 2011).

Three months after the formation of the new Albanian party DUI, parliamentary elections were held in Macedonia. According to the results of the Macedonian State Election Commission, the party of Ali Ahmeti won 102,038 votes, which is 12% of the voting electorate, i.e. the majority of the Albanian population (102,038 votes DUI – 40,951 votes PDP) (Macedonia's State Election Commission, 2012). Thus, Ali

Ahmeti with his newly created party, enjoyed tremendous support by the ethnic Albanians in Macedonia.

The support by the ethnic Albanians continues even today, namely the party of Ali Ahmeti from 2002 until this day has constantly had the greatest support among the Albanian parties in Macedonia. As a coalition partner in the government it has been present every year since 2002 to this day, except from 2006 to 2008, when although it had the greatest support in the Albanian block, VMRO-DPMNE managed to make a coalition and created a government with the Democratic Party of Albanians (DPA).

Despite the fact that the formation of a paramilitary organization is punishable, Ali Ahmeti through his presence in the government achieved much for the Albanian people and the members of the NLA. Namely on 20. 7. 2011, the Macedonian Parliament with the support of 63 MPs voted for the amnesty for the NLA terrorists charged for »War Crimes« in 2001 (Murusic, 2011). The cases known as »the four cases« were connected to the kidnapping and liquidation of 12 civilians and inhumane behavior and humiliation during the conflict in 2001. On the contrary, the Macedonian Johan Tarchulovski on July 10, 2008 in The Hague was sentenced to 12 years of imprisonment, as a responsible person in an action of the Macedonian police in the locality Ljuboten where 3 Albanian civilians were murdered and several properties were damaged (International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, 2010).

## 6 CONCLUSION

Many visible signs indicate that Albanian crime achieved a high level of organization and sophistication. With its multi-criminal activity, reaching a scientific level of safety, complex organization and firm discipline, they prove that it is not an ordinary criminal gang, but it is a well organized, sophisticated and widespread criminal organization – a Mafia. The Albanian mafia currently threatens the entire world because of their rapid and constant development, and their ability and desire to have greater and more secure business area. International reports rank the Albanian mafia as the leading one in Europe. Albania, Kosovo and Macedonia, are the countries where the presence of ethnic Albanians is largest and which are indicated as their home countries. The border highlands regions which are difficult to control and where Macedonia borders Kosovo and Albania, are of great importance for the Albanian mafia and their illegal activities such as trafficking in people, weapons, drugs, smuggling of migrants, etc.

What is of crucial importance for the development and the expansion of a criminal organization is its ability to take control over areas and to disrupt the safety situation in the region. One such example is the conflict in 2001, when the so-called NLA occupies the north-western regions of Macedonia, which for a longer period were out of the control of the Macedonian forces. Such a situation leaves the way for organized crime wide open.

Crime and corruption have played a major role since 2001 when Macedonia found itself involved in a real state of war. The criminal networks within the

Albanian community are the key element in the organization and maintenance of Albanian paramilitary forces. Powerful Albanian mafia controls a substantial part of the circles that deal with heroin, cigarettes, and people trafficking, as well as prostitution. Albanian radical groups completely managed to benefit from the networks and the support of the Albanian mafia. It was a great help to the armament as a precondition for organizing the conflict in Macedonia.

Very often, the criminal organizations involved in various conflicts in certain countries, remain to function after the conflict is over. Unlike in 2001, today they have a political body or a party, the so called DUI, whose structure differs from the structure of the NLA. Through such a party, the paramilitary organization NLA executes its political goals and interests very successfully. Lately, the public demand of Ali Ahmeti the leader of DUI and NLA, is giving pensions to the veterans of the NLA.

A month after the parliamentary elections in Macedonia, amnesty was granted for the »Hague cases«. It was the time when the leader of VMRO-DPMNE, Nikola Gruevski, needed the support of the Albanian party DUI, so that he would be able to form a government. The leader of DUI, Ali Ahmeti, took advantage of the situation and succeeded in his intention: the Parliament granting amnesty for the cases just prior to forming the Government. As long as there is no unity among Macedonian people, NLA will continue taking advantage of situations, which would, slowly but surely, be bring Albanians closer to achieving their goal, a step at a time. Their main goal is to establish control over the government in Macedonia and Albania, i.e. to bring the platform »Ethnic Albania« to life. This has been a public secret among the Albanian political parties in Macedonia for some time, which seems to be gaining on intensity lately.

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