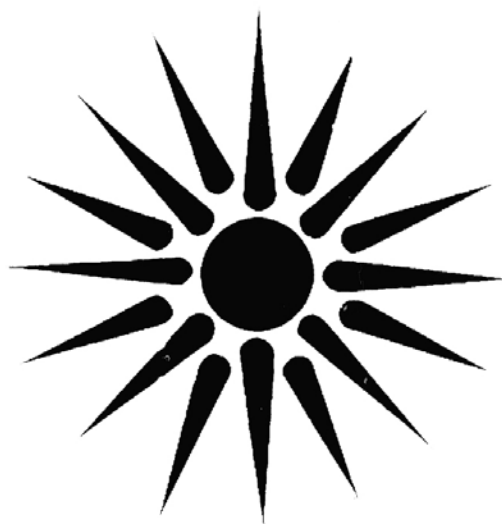


# *Testimonials*

2001



By  
**Pande Petrovski**

**(Translated from Macedonian to English and edited by  
Risto Stefov)**

# Testimonials 2001

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## CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION .....	4
THE MILITARY CRISIS IN MACEDONIA IN 2001 .....	10
TAKING MILITARY ACTION AGAINST THE “NLA” .....	20
MILITARY OPERATION IN SKOPJE TSRNA GORA “MH -1”	38
EXECUTING THE OPERATION .....	45
KUMANOVO OPERATION “MH - 2” .....	53
EXECUTING OPERATION “MH - 2” .....	63
EXECUTING OPERATION “VAKSINTSE” .....	73
OPERATION “RUGINTSE” .....	76
ARACHINOVO - AN ATTEMPT TO RESOLVE THE CRISIS BY POLITICAL MEANS .....	86
EXECUTING OPERATION “ARACHINOVO” .....	98
CONDITIONS AFTER THE MILITARY OPERATION IN ARACHINOVO .....	111
EVENTS AFTER THE CEASEFIRE .....	127
KARPALAK .....	156
LIUBOTEN .....	181
DISARMING THE SO-CALLED “NLA” .....	185
SUMMARY .....	189
AUTHOR’S SHORT BIOGRAPHY .....	197
EXCERPT FROM THE BOOK REVIEW - TESTIMONIES 2001 .....	199
ATTACHMENTS .....	201

## INTRODUCTION

The Yugoslav People's Army (JNA), as a federal army in the composition of Yugoslavia, with the disintegration of the state, gradually began to collapse. The Yugoslav disintegration began with military actions primarily in Slovenia and Croatia. JNA units, after leaving part of their military assets in Slovenia and Croatia, withdrew from those territories as those states declared their independence as sovereign states.

Three types of people lived in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Serbians, Croats and Bosnians. From that aspect the JNA tried to prevent Bosnia and Herzegovina from unraveling, but failed on account of the international community sending military forces to prevent a conflict - a civil war broke out with serious consequences.

Macedonia gained its independence without war - peacefully, with a referendum on September 8, 1991 in which 95% of the people voted for an independent state. Parliamentary elections were organized during the course of 1990 in a multi-party system along with independent institutions: Parliament, a government with its own ministries, etc.

In December 1991, the Republic of Macedonia and the Coalition Secretariat for National Defense of the former Yugoslavia (SSNO) began negotiations for the peaceful creation of the Army of the Republic of Macedonia (ARM). After the talks an agreement was reached for JNA to be withdrawn from the Republic of Macedonia in February and March 1992. After JNA's withdrawal, the Republic of Macedonia, as the last republic to achieve its independence from former Yugoslavia, finally formed its own army. The ARM was a joint army of all nationalities living in Macedonia. After the agreement between the then government and SSNO, the JNA peacefully withdrew and took all military vehicles, equipment and other personal weapons belonging to the border guards who secured the border between the Republic of Macedonia and Albania, Greece and Bulgaria.

The formation of ARM began with the appointment of the chief of staff who was then part of the JNA, but without equipment and

armaments. Using the experience and enthusiasm of the then JNA Macedonian officers and staff, the establishment of the Army began with the first recruits for military service being called in on April 1, 1992. Until then, until 1991, the JNA command of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Army Region (under the authority of the 3-AO were: territories of the Republic of Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro and FR Southern Serbia) was deployed in the territory of the Republic of Macedonia, and its units (joint operating units) had Bitola Corps for Western Macedonia, Kumanovo Corps in Eastern Macedonia and the town Vranje in Southern Serbia. Besides these operating units that were deployed in the Republic of Macedonia there were also air force units and air defense missile units and some independent brigades, etc., i.e. a composition of 20-25,000 soldiers and officers.

Even though the JNA took all the equipment and weapons, it did not take the human factor. The Republic of Macedonia had an active and reservist, skilled and JNA trained soldier and officer composition of about 120,000 people. The human factor was not a problem for forming the ARM. Therefore, the Republic of Macedonia immediately began its establishment using the trained officers and non-commissioned officers (NCO's), personnel from all generations and branches (infantry, artillery, armour, engineers, pilots, sailors, etc.).

The officers and NCO staff were the basis for the quick formation of the ARM. Besides that, the Republic of Macedonia also opened a number of military facilities in the cities with good infrastructure and provided them with quality training. Three Army Corps were then quickly formed: the Bitola Corps, the Skopje Corps and the Kumanovo Corps. Territorial defense became part of ARM's structure.

In the nine year period before the military crisis began, ARM had three reorganizations during which it formed a small, mobile and modern army which, above all, represented a factor of deterrence against all possible aggressions and, at the same time, became combat ready to ensure execution of the tasks specified by the Republic of Macedonia's Constitution and by the Law on Defense.

In 1998 I (Pande Petrovski) was given the task to organize and lead the ARM reorganization, to primarily establish a compact army, similar to those in NATO member states. This was to be done within 5 years and as such the army was to be reorganized so that it could be a candidate for NATO membership.

The plan for the ARM reorganization, under its current composition, by constitutional rights, was signed by Commander in Chief, President Kiro Gligorov. According to that plan, ARM was composed of: 14,000 active soldiers and officers of whom 50% were professional soldiers and 50% were recruited. On top of that about 40,000 reserve soldiers and officers were included. The total number of military personnel in the ARM was around 55,000, corresponding to international standards in terms of the number of inhabitants and economic power of the state (2% in terms of the number of residents in the state). Before this ARM reorganization, together with the reserve and active composition, there were about 120,000 military personnel.

To assist in the ARM reorganization, the then government of the Republic of Macedonia signed an agreement with the United States, or with an instructor team of retired U.S. military veteran officers known as the MPRI. The MPRI was hired to assist with the drafting of a stabilization and deterrence plan and, because the Republic of Macedonia was already a member of the Partnership for Peace, it became a member in the partnership for peace system.

The group of instructors offered a plan to reorganize the ARM but that plan was declined by the ARM General Staff and by the Ministry of Defense. The proposed plan was for the Republic of Macedonia to have a single brigade, i.e. a light infantry brigade with two light battalions and a small part of special units. (No artillery, armour, aviation, etc.)

At that time (1998) the Republic of Macedonia, in terms of military equipment, had: 94 T-55 tanks, 36 105 mm howitzers, over 100 122 mm howitzers, over 100 120-60 mm mortars and over 300 APCs, etc.

On December 26, 1999, after Boris Trajkovski the new President of the Republic of Macedonia was elected, the Minister of Defense, Academic N. Kljusev, organized an orientation for introducing the supreme commander with the situation in the former Army and the plan of reorganization for the next 5 years.

A report regarding the current ARM situation was filed by the then Army Chief of Staff General Trajche Krstevski, and I (Pande Petrovski) filed a report on what ARM should look like in five years, after the reorganization.

Among other things, in this report I stressed: “We have disagreements with the MPRI team about the reorganization, but that was superseded because the plan was twice fully accepted in Brussels by all NATO member states without any reservations.”

Shortly after that, in January 2000, about 500 officers, including all generals, were retired i.e. for being “obstacles” to the reform.

After that, after the officers were retired, the plan prepared by the MPRI team was accepted - and in 2000 the ARM reorganization was started under MPRI control. The Republic of Slovenia refused the MPRI team’s offer to reorganize the Slovenian Army. Croatia accepted the MPRI but then expelled them after a while. Here, in Macedonia, we kept the MPRI active until May 2001.

Before the crisis, at the beginning of 2001, ARM was in the final stages of reformation or “dismantling” (3. Army Corps disbanded, 2. Army Corps - Bitola disbanded, tank and artillery units disbanded, aviation dissolved), the border brigade was under reformation and each guard house had 10-12 soldiers, etc.

First of all in 2000: a newly formed unit was promoted. It consisted of a light infantry brigade with two battalions officially launched by President Boris Trajkovski which, in their composition, had one professional battalion and one battalion with conscripts.

The MPRI team proposal signed by H.J. Haen, accompanied with a letter, was sent to the NATO ambassador in the Republic of

Macedonia in which included, among other things, were the following:

In reference to the ARM structure or what kind of army the Republic of Macedonia should have, it said: “The hardest question is the necessity of helicopters. The current budget cannot support a force that will be compatible with NATO and with pilots trained by NATO standards; this should remain an inspiration for the future...”

5. “The mentioned Macedonian policy is defense, which in modern military science means more antitank power than tanks. Also, the limited budgets and human resources dictate that there is no need for tanks in its force, especially if they are not good enough and if their maintenance is expensive. There needs to be a proper threat assessment and strategic defense analysis done which will focus on the period up to 2005 and beyond. At the moment, all in NATO, here and in Brussels have difficulty with ARM’s needs to have tank battalions for two corps. The only scenario which would require such equipment is for parades or for repressive internal operations.”

“...There will be need for radical reduction of staff, and as far as I could gather from the recent publications it is also the aim of the Ministry of Defense. However, due to their current pension rights, the staff can delay the reforms. Therefore it is necessary to make arrangement for early retirement, which will be financially viable for those who need to go before retirement, and it would be good for the overall morale...”

9. “There is a time window of opportunity from 5-10 years, while NATO troops are in the region, for a true restructuring which will be interoperable in line with NATO. Maximum use of this period will result in an army with a clear purpose, an army that will thrive in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This will strengthen the stability of the Republic of Macedonia and the entire region.”

These instructions – MPRI guidelines, were fully implemented in Macedonia in 2000 through the NATO office and ARM entered the 2001 war in the Republic of Macedonia as “an Army of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.”



A war was brought to the Republic of Macedonia in 2001, which came down to testing its ability to defend its independence and territorial integrity. Why did this war occur in the Republic of Macedonia in 2001, why after ten years of sovereignty and independence and international recognition? Today, 2006, the citizens of the Republic of Macedonia are still searching for the truth, “Why did the 2001 war take place?” - “No one wants to tell that truth.”

From a political aspect, a “revolution” took place to change the socio-political system. From a security aspect where the security forces were called upon to stop the war from taking place – it was a “hot-cold” tactic giving the impression that the Republic of Macedonia could not solve the problem by itself on its own, with its own security forces. This is why the politicians won this war and the ARM and the people were humiliated by their then current “leaders”.

We are certain that historians will have the final say regarding this period, and especially why the war took place in 2001!?

I got involved later in the resolution of what happened to the Republic of Macedonia. After I became involved in General Headquarters I had direct participation in the state leadership and in the way the crisis was resolved by military means. I also participated in the process of decision-making, planning of military operations and the execution of combat operations. In this effort, and through writing this book, I have tried to bring my view of the 2001 events to the public fore. My expression is primarily due to my respect for the brave defenders who sincerely stood in the ranks of the ARM and defended their homeland, and a special tribute to the fighters who gave their lives for the freedom of their homeland.

The Author

## **THE MILITARY CRISIS IN MACEDONIA IN 2001**

What happened to the Republic of Macedonia in 2001 - a Classic war, a military crisis, in other words an undefined war?

Understanding the elements or characteristics of a classic war, and comparing them with what happened to the Republic of Macedonia, one can arrive at the conclusion that it was a war or aggression of one state over another. War was brought to the Republic of Macedonia in 2001 with all the elements of a military crisis. Whether this war or military crisis was in agreement with the then state - political structures in Macedonia or not will be decided by historians. I became involved later, in the resolution of the crisis, and participated in the planning and execution of military operations, except in the military activities in the villages Tanushevtsi and Malina Maala. About this I intend to bring my own views and report the facts that suggested the involvement of many elements. But for now let me say that this was a military crisis planned from the outside with strictly developed tools to control the crisis, and of course to achieve political goals.

On March 14, 2001, the then ARM Chief of General Headquarters Lieutenant General Iovo Andreeveski called a meeting with all the retired generals, to inform us about the situation in Macedonia. I do not recall exactly who was invited but present at the meeting were: myself (Pande Petrovski), Lieutenant General Mitre Arsovski, Lieutenant General Dragoliub Botsinov, General Traiche Krstevski and Brigadier General Mile Manolev.

At the meeting the Chief of Staff of ARM General Headquarters, Lieutenant General Iovo Andreeveski, informed us of the situation, or what was known over the media and how the military operation in the villages Tanushevtsi and Malina Maala was going.

After Lieutenant General Iovo Andreeveski's presentation we had a discussion and those present had their own ideas regarding the situation. One of the generals, during the discussion, among other things, said:

“Our party took the position that the Republic of Macedonia must be defended with help from Bulgaria. There are 20,000 soldiers outside of our border ready to be put into action immediately if we ask Bulgaria to defend the Republic of Macedonia.”

I could no longer listen to him and I reacted nervously. I said: “How can you, General, say such words when we all know that Bulgaria, historically, has always entered the Republic of Macedonia with intentions “to defend” it and always behaved like an occupier. The Republic of Macedonia has enough of its own military capacity to defend against these “terrorist gangs” and continued: - “Iovo should immediately request permission from the President of the Republic of Macedonia to start mobilizing part of our units - i.e. a partial mobilization according to the plan for combat readiness, developed by General Headquarters and approved by the Government of the Republic Macedonia.”

My proposal was supported by the other generals and it was concluded to start preparing part of the military units as soon as possible to prevent deterioration of the situation.

General Iovo had his own recommendation: “The politicians should solve the problem, given that they have caused it.” Perhaps he was right, but the problem needed to be resolved by ARM.

The events that took place before my involvement, however, had something else to say:

On February 16, 2001 a firefight broke out between ARM and four men dressed in black uniforms near the village Tanushevtsi. The battle took place near the village Debalde (SRY) as the armed men were traveling towards the village Tanushevtsi. The same day at around 15:55, in the forest about 150 metres north-west of the “old store”, two persons were observed obtaining a tent. But before the border security guards could identify them, they made their escape over the border. They then opened fire on the border security personnel from the other side of the Yugoslav border and so did several other groups from a few places in the same woods. The Macedonian border security was attacked from the other side of the border on several occasions. It was the first element which indicated

that acts of aggression by a foreign country were being carried out against our territory, especially since the very same aggressors were dressed in Kosovo Protection Corps uniforms. Later we will show that they not only wore Kosovo Protection Corps uniforms but that they were Kosovo Protection Corps supporters.

Four days later, on February 20, 2001, ARM border security noticed movements of armed, uniformed men in the Kosovo part of the village Debalde. The same day men in camouflage uniforms were observed moving in the direction of the village Tanushevtsi. On February 28, 2001 a shooting spree between ARM and a number of armed, uniformed men took place near the village Tanushevtsi. The same day around 15:40 Macedonian border security and police were attacked near the Tanushevtsi observation post. The attack was carried out by armed, uniformed groups of men from the village Tanushevtsi (the people who attacked wore Kosovo Protection Corps black uniforms).

On March 4, 2001 three ARM personnel were killed (two from a planted mine, one from sniper fire, killed at the village Tanushevtsi).

On March 5, 2001 ARM personnel were fired upon by mortar fire. The mortars were fired from the Kosovo side of the border; this means that artillery was fired into the territory of the Republic of Macedonia from a neighbouring state. Mortars were fired and aggression was initiated against legal Army members who were there to defend the integrity of their territory.

ARM only reciprocated against these provocations or classic attacks perpetrated on Macedonian territory from a foreign territory, and against our legal ARM border and Ministry of Internal Affairs authorities. ARM was supposedly “instructed to do this by the top political leadership” and at the same time the “government expressed its dissatisfaction with KFOR’s current unresponsiveness; in not having performed its tasks” (cabinet session report). At the same session, the government concluded that: “The competent national authorities need to strengthen their existing measures and take additional measures to secure the border in order to prevent spillover of the conflict from the north to our country and to protect the vital institutions and facilities in our state.” Following the

government's decision, and not that of the Supreme Commander, or of the Chief of Staff, etc., the provocations continued to occur on a daily basis. Kosovo Protection Corps units kept invading our territory from Tanushevtsi and Malina Maala, and no organized military action was taken to curb the invasions.

Official border service rules were clearly provided by Article 24 which stated: "If an armed group enters our territory, ARM must immediately take action to terminate and destroy the invasion."

It took until March 12, 2001 before ARM was "called in" to take broader actions to completely clean up the villages Tanushevtsi and Malina Maala with KFOR's alleged knowledge. After this was done, at 1700, the KFOR commander and the ARM commander in charge of the campaign met at the border to "establish a border regime." So, what happened to the terrorists, where did they go?

On March 14, 2001 at 1030, a number of armed men appeared in Tetovo Kule, Tetovo, and attacked a Ministry of the Interior police patrol traveling in the direction: Tetovo - Seltse - Lavtsi. Fifteen police officers were injured during the attack, seven of whom sustained gunshot wounds. It seemed like KFOR and ARM had not done their job in this common responsibility that they shared!

Besides all the previously released information in the print and electronic media, now there was an obvious public concern that called for action: by ARM or by the Ministry of the Interior. In essence the "mastermind" of this military crisis, which carried out "provocations" in advance, as they then called them, wanted to test the state and military leadership to see if it was willing to take decisive action and, in the beginning, to see if it would subdue those 27 terrorists in the villages Tanushevtsi and Malina Maala, of whom only 8 terrorists were from Malina Maala and Tanushevtsi. The rest were from the Kosovo Protection Corps who wanted to continue planning to expand the depth of the crisis in Macedonia. (According to captured documents, included in the list of terrorists from the villages Tanushevtsi and Malina Maala were: Muharem Ziberi Hasani, Edim Adem Shakiri, Zadik Raif Romani, Emirush Medzhi Veliu, Zekir Sefet Xhaferi, Agim Musa Memeti, Kadri Rusten

Sadiku, Esat Seifula Sulusi and Isa Ietish Sinani. The others were from Kosovo.)

In spite of the fact that the Republic of Macedonia was a legitimate, independent and sovereign state, defined by its Constitution, and having developed laws for Defense and rules for border security purposes, the state authorities waited 26 days before they ordered the security forces to take serious measures and take back the space that was occupied inside the territory of the Republic Macedonia: Tanushevtsi and Malina Maala. The media, rightly so, began to put pressure on the Republic of Macedonia's state authorities to take military action in defense of our country's sovereignty and territorial integrity because, the way things were going, there was expressed doubt that ARM was even capable of playing that role.

In the afternoon of March 16, 2001 I was visited by Vlado Popovski, a member of the Security Council and defense, who said: "Pande, the Prime Minister (Liupcho Georgievski) and President (Boris Trajkovski) would like see you tomorrow at 10:00 hours."

"Why do they want to see me?" I asked Vlado.

"Come an hour earlier and I will brief you," he replied.

On March 17 and 18, 2001, those who had previously forced me into premature retirement now persuaded me to come back in order to help them solve the crisis by military means. A few months later, during an interview with President Boris Trajkovski, he was honest in answering my question: "Why did you retire me when I was not ready to retire?"

He said to me: "General, when I became president I did not know you. Richard Griffiths, the US Major General, brought me a list of who should stay and who should be retired. I just signed the list."

He then looked at me with a particularly honest look, giving me no reason not to believe his statement.

From the conversation I had with Prime Minister Georgievski, I got the impression that he sincerely wanted to solve the crisis by

military means, but had doubts about the General Headquarters command staff. During our conversation he said: "The Chief of Staff is afraid - he is afraid of taking serious military action using ARM."

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## GENERAL ASSESMENT

We were informed that Tetovo was peaceful and that there was no significant fighting in the hills north of the city. In the border region a total of 79 individuals were encountered by MNB (j), a large number of whom tossed their arms in front of KFOR soldiers. A determined amount of arms and other military equipment was taken. It is understandable that 44 individuals were taken to prison at the MNB (j) prison in Prizren for further questioning. Other than that, nearly 600 refugees left for Kosovo. And it looks like a lot more are attempting to get to Kosovo. MNB (j) sent 2 additional units to that region. UNHCR estimated that 7,600 refugees have crossed into Kosovo since February 16, from whom 3,700 crossed in the last 3 days.

With the view that violence in FYROM seems to be subsiding, attention now is being focused towards the movement of refugees and former armed Albanian extremists who are returning over the border.

## INTELLEGENCE INFORMATION

(N / K S) (ORKFOR) around 150 supporters of the armed Albanian extremists in FYROM, from Tetovo Region, were attempting to flee over the border to Kosovo in the course of the early morning hours. By afternoon KFOR units collected 78 of them. With their escape to Kosovo they will undoubtedly attempt to identify themselves as refugees who are fleeing the shooting. But it cannot be precluded that the anger and frustration of these individuals will not be turned towards KFOR.

## OPERATIVE SITUATION

1. The action of encircling and searching Krivenik in close proximity to FYROM's border. On the 27<sup>th</sup> at 0610 hours, Polukrbat conducted an encirclement and search of a questionable house in Krivenik (EM 227 624). The night before 20 individuals had entered the house carrying boxes and suitcases. When they searched the house they found an AKM 7,62mm rifle with 27 boxes of ammunition, an M-57 7,62mm pistol with 6 cases of ammunition, and 1 bulletproof vest. The boxes that were observed the night before were filled with food; the house was a grocery store.

2. On the 27<sup>th</sup> at 1325 hours HRS 4-27 I 13 TG informed that 7 Albanian people came over control point 75 (EN 550 050) on the road to Vitina. They left Skopje to escape the violence in Macedonia and to visit their aunt. They were a father, mother, four children and one friend of the family. The father was to leave the family and return back to Skopje and go to work.

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The above was a report filed by the South Brigade of the KFOR composition responsible for providing border security between the Republic of Macedonia and Kosovo.

Essentially, this whole thing was all about something else. Five hundred experienced officers were retired in 2000. An engineering officer was appointed head of General Headquarters and a quartermaster as his deputy. ARM was under reform in 2000 during which time part of its units were disbanded, primarily: Skopje 3. Army Corps - disbanded, armoured professional battalion - disbanded, 2. Army Corps Bitola in the process of being disband, border brigade still operationally unprepared, only 60% staffed with personnel and 43 watchtowers each staffed with 10 to 12 soldiers. Even though ARM had sufficient weapons and technical means, tanks, artillery, guns and ammunition, much of the human factor was disbanded. Most responsible for the situation with ARM and its combat readiness was its Supreme Commander - or the President of the Republic of Macedonia (under Articles 16, 18, 28 and 40 of the Republic of Macedonia's Law of Defense). But for the security of the state, according to the same law, the government also shared responsibility through the Ministries of Interior and Defense.



(Articles 16, 19 and 20 of the same law.) The responsibility does not fall on General Headquarters - as an ARM expert authority or on its overall situation of combat readiness for the defense of the Republic of Macedonia's territorial integrity. But in February and March of 2001, ARM went through a number of "reforms" implemented by the MPRI team through a contract, signed in 1998 by the Republic of Macedonia's Minister of Defense.

In 1999 the US MPRI team requested ARM officers to be involved in the action plan and programs for preparing the Republic of Macedonia for NATO membership. Apart from other things covered by the program, was the proposal for the kind of Army the Republic of Macedonia would need, as a condition for its NATO membership. After reviewing the program, the then General Headquarters did not accept the proposal (among other things, it was proposed that the Republic of Macedonia have only one light infantry brigade with two light battalions). General Headquarters rejected the program and developed a new program with a fully developed, new reorganization for ARM. This new reorganization - reformation was signed by Kiro Gligorov, the then President of the Republic of Macedonia. Our rejection of the proposal offered by the MPRI team, however, caused some disagreements between General Richard Griffiths, MPRI team leader, and the ARM generals. But, after Boris Trajkovski the new President of the Republic of Macedonia was elected he retired those "putting the brakes" on the MPRI version of the reforms. Immediately after that the MPRI version was accepted and reforms were started in 2000, reforms that were proposed by General Richard Griffiths of the United States of America.

In that period (February and March 2001) all state authorities and party officials downplayed each incident of the crisis as an ordinary, everyday "incident". Later they blamed them on lack of "awareness". At that time, border security authorities were reporting that members of the Kosovo Protection Corps were firing at Macedonian personnel in the Republic of Macedonia from Kosovo, Yugoslavia, in full view of KFOR soldiers - who were mandated to provide security at the Kosovo - Republic of Macedonia border.

For mutual cooperation in securing the border, General Headquarters and KFOR had established an operational centre of cooperation and information with the ARM border authorities.

ARM General Headquarters should have raised the village Tanushevtsi issue to the most critical level. As a matter of fact, Article 24 of the border service law compelled ARM border control units to take immediate military actions and inform the relevant authorities of the foreign invasions into the territory of the Republic of Macedonia. The ARM Chief of Staff did not require permission from the President of the Republic of Macedonia to deploy ARM in this matter. He was only required to inform the government authorities and, above all, the President of the action taken.

After surveying the conditions and developments in the villages Tanushevtsi and Malina Maala, I came across some things which to me seemed inexplicable, about the Ministry of Defense and General Headquarters - President - which had taken place since the beginning of the so-called border incidents. An entire platoon (23) of terrorists was relocated in that region from the Kosovo Protection Corps: 3 were residents of Tanushevtsi. It took the “top military and government” authorities almost an entire month to make the necessary arrangements to handle the situation and to raise it to an International level in accordance with the Constitution and Law of Defense. ARM had both the military capacity and international law on its side when it came to defending our country’s integrity and independence. Publicly the situation was manipulated and downplayed and later justified as lack of information about the real situation. But the actual reports filed in those days tell a different story. Also, it was inappropriate for the authorities to manipulate the situation through the media by publicly announcing that military action would be immediately taken to crack down on the terrorists. While it was publicly claimed “that it was the local people from the village Tanushevtsi causing the incidents and handling the problem was the responsibility of the police and politicians”, privately it was well-known that this was not entirely true and essentially the opposite. This means that, from the beginning the so-called “provocations” in the Tanushevtsi - Malina Maala vicinity were classic examples of territorial integrity violations. This means that the Republic of Macedonia’s territorial integrity was violated at the

border of a neighbouring country, which essentially meant the beginning of aggression. Given what had happened, non-action on the part of ARM cannot be justified; just “because the provocations occurred in settlements where there was proper police service” (as was reported by the Minister of Defense and by the Chief of Staff). This gives me the right to conclude that someone, from the beginning, did not want to take serious action; and not because ARM was not ready or there was not enough military capacity to deal with these so-called provocations.

However, regardless of the ARM human factor being disbanded in 2000, which was then in possession over 400 carriers, 94 T - 55 A tanks, 6 squadrons of 122 m/m artillery, 2 squadrons of 105 m/m artillery, numerous 120 m/m and 60 m/m mortars, 6 b/k munitions and overall light weapon and 4 b/K tank and artillery weapons. Besides that the Republic of Macedonia also had trained staff in its reserves available to ARM. In other words it had 120,000 trained reserve personnel - Soldiers and officers.

Being familiar with the overall situation in ARM, its fighting capacity, the ability of the soldiers and officers, I accepted the task and began to work to find a military solution to the problem the Republic of Macedonia was facing, using the same means that every country in the world would employ to defend its independence if attacked from a foreign territory.

Well, at least that’s what I thought then with the modest amount of information I was given about the aims of the “aggressor”, the Kosovo Protection Corps, and the total forces it had rebased on Macedonian territory.

## **TAKING MILITARY ACTION AGAINST THE “NLA”**

On March 21, 2001, by Presidential decree from the President of the Republic Macedonia, I was reactivated and appointed Deputy Chief of ARM General Headquarters. By the same decree I was obliged to take command of the Tetovo operation dubbed “MH”.

Two days before that, on March 18, 2001, when I accepted my reactivation, I had a chance to view ARM’s condition in Tetovo Region and formed a team to execute the “Tetovo Operation”. In the team I engaged senior ARM personnel from those who had been retired the year before by the Minister of Defense because they were in the way of ARM’s reforms, i.e. those who were “putting the brakes” on the MPRI recommendations headed by retired Major General Richard Griffiths of the USA.

A new “rearranged” General Headquarters and leadership were formed in 2000 to command ARM.

The new General Headquarters formation was:

- For Chief of Staff of General Headquarters, appointed was Engineering Lieutenant General Jovo Andreeveski (with 43 years of work experience);
- For Deputy Chief of Staff of General Headquarters, appointed was Brigadier General Savo Janev, a quartermaster officer;
- For Director of General Headquarters, a new function introduced by the reorganization, appointed was Major General Tushi Zehedin;
- For Commander of the Corps (the only such unit in the entire territory of the Republic of Macedonia), appointed was Major General Giorgi Karakutovski - an artillery officer;
- For Commander of the Border Brigade, appointed was Major General Metodi Stamboliski.
- And for Commander of the First Infantry Brigade - as a unit for quick reactions and the single brigade promoted by the President of

the Republic of Macedonia in 2000, appointed was Brigadier General Adil Gazafer.

In January 2001 ARM was presented with this forward looking structure of leadership and command set by Decree by the President of the Republic of Macedonia. Liuben Paunovski was appointed Minister of Defense.

When I again returned to active duty I was able to examine some of the documents pertaining to the operational performance in the villages Tanushevci - Brest - Malina Maala. I was amazed at what was happening! I found orders signed and issued by the Supreme Commander to engage a tank and implement, etc., which were not under the Supreme Commander's authority. In fact, the Supreme Commander signed for, or approved, the entire operation. Every military operation must be planned very carefully to include times, places, which forces to be engage at what times and for how long and when the military operation is to be completed.

It was not clear to me why the Supreme Commander signed individual orders - and then I got my answer: because "this problem (attack on the Republic of Macedonia) was caused by the politicians, so they had to settle it". In other words, the top military leaders required the police to solve the problem, since it was not in the border belt (the border belt, according to the Republic of Macedonia's official rules, was within 100 metres of the border line except for Ohrid and Prespa Lakes where it is 500 metres), the Minister of Defense persistently demanded that the problem be solved by political means.

And as such no measures, actions or any other form of activity were taken by authorized persons or services (ministers, chiefs, etc.) to protect and defend their own territory in accordance with the Constitution and the Law on Defense. This inaction seemed treasonous and those behind it could have been considered as accomplices of the attackers threatening the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Republic of Macedonia. Action was eventually taken, a month later, and only because of media and public pressure. This gave me an opportunity to review and analyze the events that

took place in the villages Tanushevtsi and Malina Maala, which took place during the period when I was still in retirement.

I was personally surprised when the top state leadership called me back. My surprise was that I did not know why the Prime Minister and the President were looking for me - I thought they needed some advice regarding the overall situation that had been presented to them from a military point of view. I never thought that they would reactivate me.

After several days of reviewing the situation with ARM and with what was happening in the field, we formed a team which developed a draft plan for dealing with the terrorist groups in Tetovo, or Shar Mountain and beyond.

#### THE “MH” TETOVO OPERATION

On March 21, at 22:00 hours we took our proposed plan for the preparation and execution of a military operation before the state leadership. The plan read:

“Draft Plan for Conducting the Operation”

“According to our findings, acting in the Tetovo terrain, in the villages Poroi, Shipkovitsa, Veitse, Germo and Kale are about 150 to 200 armed individuals who are fortified, established and fully in control of the space of the western and southern slopes of Shar Planina. In previous diversionary actions the terrorist groups (DTG) have shown that they are prepared and determined to hold those positions for a long time, especially the villages Shipkovitsa, Kale, Veitse and Germo, centrally structured in Kale.

“As Supreme Commander I propose that you issue the following order:

- To immediately start preparations to act against the diversionary-terrorist operational zone - right: Villages Slatino and Serdalitsa; left: Villages Brvenitsa, Popova Shapka and Veshala in depth of the Yugoslav state border of the given zone.

Purpose of the operation:

- To attack and destroy the DTG in the given zone and to establish full control and operation of the state government.
- Readiness for the operation, 2 days,
- Units for the special actions to be obtained from the Ministry of the Interior,
- All planned ARM and Ministry of the Interior forces are to be placed under a unified command which will be led and managed by the Deputy Chief of Staff of General Headquarters,
- The operation is to organize - Use of:

Support Forces,  
Security forces,  
Heavy forces,  
Landing forces”.

The proposal was accepted by the Supreme Commander and everyone from the state leadership.

After the ideological part of operation “MH” was accepted, the previously selected team of officers began to work on the development of the full plan.

I decided: The main forces to participate in this military operation would be the units from 2. Army Corps (Bitola) which I commanded 5 years ago. I strongly believe in those officers and they fully know me and were familiar with my leadership style.

On March 22, 23 and 24, 2001, I spent most of my time on the ground in preparation for the operation to be certain that everything that we agreed on would be done and that President Boris Trajkovski would sign off on the Plan on March 23, 2001, after he returned from an official business trip. (He was in Geneva on business.)

On March 23, 2001 I was on the ground in Tetovo for the entire day discussing the operation. I returned around 19:00 hours and was called by Prime Minister Georgievski.

At his Cabinet I briefed him of what I thought, of the decisions made and tasks to be performed by ARM and when and where we were planning to engage the Operation.

Besides that, I also briefed him of the actual military operational plan and how it was going to be implemented: Time, place and means of engaging the units on March 25 and 26, 2001.

When I was done he said: “Now go to General Headquarters and around 21:00 hours, when President Boris Trajkovski arrives, we will come and he will sign this Plan”. (Plan “MH” to perform the combat operation.)

I waited for President Boris Trajkovski to sign the plan of action until 24:00 hours. The next day, Friday March 23, 2001, I went to Minister Liuben Paunovski’s office, he was still there waiting for the President to arrive. I said to him: “Minister, are we still going to wait? What is the problem? Is there any information that verifies that the President is even coming?” He said he had no such information, but would immediately check.

At one o’clock in the morning, on March 24, 2001, Minister Liuben Paunovski spoke with President Boris Trajkovski on the telephone. After talking to him Paunovski said” “General, go and get some rest, the signing will take place on March 24, 2001 at about 12:00 hours.

I was already up at 7 o’clock in the morning of March 24, 2001 and checking on the units to make sure that during the nights of March 23 and 24 they occupied their positions in accordance with the operational plan which, up to now, had not been signed and approved.

In order to condition our forces and to achieve surprise on March 23 and 24, 2001, I ordered the units to exercise the artillery and helicopters in the areas where the terrorist groups were observed or in new positions.



Vlado Popovski, member of the Security Council in the Republic of Macedonia, called me on the telephone around 12:00 and asked: "Pande, where are you, I want to see you for a minute?" I said: "I am in my office waiting for the President." He said: "I am coming right now!" I thought to myself there has to be something amiss when Vlado Popovski shows up and not the President of the Republic of Macedonia.

When Vlado Popovski arrived in my office, at that very moment I was giving Colonel Josip Boshevski orders, by telephone, to attack a terrorist group that had been observed.

After greeting each other, I looked at Popovski with a serious look and said: "Vlado, please sit down, stay for a little. Can I offer you something?"

"Sorry, I can't. I don't have the time," he replied.

"What is so urgent, Vlado?" I asked.

"Please, Pande, let me ask you one more time. Can you break up the terrorists in Tetovo?"

I had no idea why Vlado now, at this very moment, was asking me this question. In my own style I replied: "Don't you worry about that, I will tear them to pieces! Is this why you came here, to ask me that?"

"Well, I came here to tell you this!" he said. "The President is hesitating, someone in Geneva scared him about something and all day he has been hesitating to sign the decision to perform the military operation. Now we will go to visit him with Ljubomir Frckovski, the Prime Minister and some others to persuade him."

"Please, Vlado, the plan needs to be signed by tonight because the operation starts early tomorrow morning - all units are tense and ready for action. Will this take place!? I am ready for action, as you can see for yourself; I am only waiting for the President. Liuben Paunovski, the Minister of Defense, said to me that he was going to

come at 12 noon to sign the plan.” Later I said: “Didn’t the Prime Minister himself openly say that the decision was already made and that the only thing remaining was for the commanders to decide when to begin the offensive?”

Immediately after our short conversation Vlado Popovski left. He left me wondering what was going on? Why didn’t the President want to sign and approve the “MH” combat operation!? I could not help myself but think of negative thoughts. If he does not approve the plan... the units are at their positions and ready to act...! Tomorrow I will order them to attack... no matter what happens... One thing I was not sure of however, was whether the Ministry of Internal Affairs was going to support me or not?

March 24, 2001 was a nightmare day for me because I was faced with a serious dilemma and negative thoughts wondering what had happened to our leadership!?

Time was on the side of the terrorists and those who directed the crisis. In the beginning when we attempted to resolve the crisis by military means we found large opposition; the brakes kept being put on. Indecision or intentional braking - the brakes were put on in an effort not to solve the crisis. I did not know what to think so I remained alone in my office. General Iovo Andreevski, the Chief of Staff, advocated that the crisis be solved by political means and so did Minister Liuben Paunovski. “There is no need for the military to get involved” they kept saying.

My reply to all those comments was that: “This was the job of the military; these are violations of the territorial integrity of the Republic Macedonia. Terrorists have occupied and are holding western Macedonia. Don’t you understand that?! How can you think this way!? We need to defend our state; it is our obligation and responsibility!” I could not understand why they thought this way and what they thought the function of the Army was if not to provide security and defense for the Republic Macedonia.

In the evening of March 24, 2001, at 18:00 hours, Prime Minister Georgievski called me and asked me where I was and what was new? I said: “I have been waiting since 12:00 hours for a decision to

approve the plan and to start the operation tomorrow.” “Okay then,” he said, “come over to my office”. About 10 minutes later I was in his office and immediately said: “Well Mr. Prime Minister, what’s going on, are we going to fight or not!?” He said: “It would be good, Pande, if I could have a look at the plan one more time.” I don’t know how I explained to him how we were going to pull off the military operation and all its details, but after my explanation he said: “Go to General Headquarters and wait there for me, I will be back.” But he did not say when he was coming back.

I was emotionally exhausted. It was already 20:00 hours (March 24, 2001). I did not know what to tell the commanders about the offensive the next day. I was constantly in radio and telephone contact with them. I kept them informed and they kept me informed regarding their readiness but constantly kept asking when they should be ready. The responsibility for initiating the offensive was resting strictly with me personally. I did not want the commanders, by any of my gestures, to feel that something odd was happening to the state leadership - especially to the Supreme Commander.

On March 24, 2001 at 21:00 hours, members of the leadership from the Ministry of Defense began to arrive at Minister Liuben Paunovski’s office. I thought that this was good; the “MH” operation would finally be approved.

I too went to the Ministry of Defense office where, besides Minister Liuben Paunovski, I also found Stoian Andov, Dosta Dimovska, Zvonko Kashirski, Dragi Grozdanovski and some others. It was already 21:30 hours. After the usual greetings, I pulled out the operational map and prepared the documents that needed signing. We waited for the President and for the Prime Minister to arrive. We sat, talked and waited in a difficult and tense atmosphere. I tried to lighten the atmosphere but only with Stoian Andov and Dosta Dimovska, the others kept quiet. The Prime Minister arrived at about 23:00 hours. He was not very happy but greeted me with a head shake, perhaps a sign that everything was going to be alright. Ten to fifteen minutes later President Boris Trajkovski arrived but I had not seen him so angry and sullen. He sat in his usual seat, looked at me and immediately said: “Let me have a look at the plan of operation one more time!”

Today, once again, I don't know how many times I explained the "MH" plan in detail.

After I went over the plan, Prime Minister Georgievski, Interior Minister Dosta Dimovska and Stoian Andov all encouraged President Boris Trajkovski, that there was nothing more to be done and that he needed to sign the plan. All the others kept silent. Boris Trajkovski called in Chief of Staff Iovo Andreevski to get his opinion. Shaken up, Iovo, without hesitation said: "I do not know anything, it is up to you, you decide!"

The President had many questions like: "How many casualties will there be?" "Will there also be civilian casualties?" "Will there be any surprises?" Etc.

By now it was 01:00 hours, the morning of March 25, 2001. I could no longer afford to stall. My units were in position and their commanders were waiting for the signal to start the attack. They should have had their orders by now and used the cover of night to get closer to the terrorists undetected. Unfortunately the President still had not approved the operation. After reflecting on what was said, I got up, marched over to the Supreme Commander and, in the voice of a soldier, said: "Mr. President, if in a few minutes you do not sign the plan and you do not approve the operation that is expected to commence today at 07:00 hours in the morning, it will be too late and all this will be for nothing. So I don't know why I am here, why you invited me here!" Everyone went silent as they waited for the President to answer. I was all broken up inside and immediately turned to my own thoughts. The President looked at me for a moment and said: "Okay then, give me that map!" (The map with the operational plan and other details.) I went and took the map and all other relevant documents and put them in front of him. He crossed himself, signed the documents and said: "May God lead us, help us and protect us!" In addition to the President, another signature was required; that of the Chief of Staff of General Headquarters as the originator of the documents. So I said to Iovo Andreevski: "Okay Iovo put your thumb print here; but if you don't want to sign I will sign on your behalf." He said: "It must be easy for you because you don't have to sign." So I said firmly to him: "I

am leading the war here, why would a signature be a problem for me?!” Even though General Iovo Andreevski had not even read the plan, he had no choice but to sign because many from the Republic of Macedonia’s state top leadership were present and watching him.

I took the map and other documents and without saying a word, saluted, stormed out of the office, joined a group of officers who were waiting for me outside and who were headed for Tetovo and went to my office. At that point I said to General Metodija Stamboliski to immediately make and deliver copies to the various designated places and then file the document in the archives. From my office, through the various links, I officially issued the necessary orders. By then it was March 25, 2001, 02:30 hours in the morning.

When I came out of my office to leave for Tetovo, Colonel Stoian Petrovski stopped me to tell me: “General, everyone is gone. The President went with Iovo to his office”. I said to Stoian, “Thank you for the information but I am no longer interested in them. All I am interested now is to know if we are ready in Tetovo. We don’t have much time?” He gave me a short answer: “Everything has long been ready.”

I am writing all this down to give the reader an understanding that, from the beginning since I became involved in the resolution of the crisis, I was met with resistance, indecision and uncertainty. The most difficult part in all of this was my understanding of President Boris Trajkovski’s behaviour. As a civilian who is not a military professional, without looking at his competent constitutional powers, he hesitated and delayed using ARM. But then, on the other hand, the Chief of Staff of General Headquarters, Major General Iovo Andreevski, who was expected to provide his support to convince the Supreme Commander to use ARM, was very reluctant. Only he knows why he behaved this way but let that be his honour forever!

But, as it turned out, the President of the Republic of Macedonia and Supreme Commander of the military eventually authorized the use of military force to resolve the crisis. (Later, according to data obtained by the Ministry of Defense, the beginning of the crisis was evaluated as follows by the external factor:

During the first phase of the crisis, the Macedonian leadership advocated for vigorous actions on a wider scale, to eliminate all Albanian strongholds in their territory. The top political leadership however, especially with Albanian political leaders in the Macedonian government and parliament, wanted more time and involvement of international forces (NATO and KFOR) in solving the problem. Although NATO, besides further securing its facilities in Kumanovo, Skopje, Tetovo and Petrovets, did nothing to calm the situation, justifying this attitude with the idea that KFOR had no mandate to carry out military actions in the territory of the Republic of Macedonia, nor to act together with the Macedonian forces. The authorities on the Macedonian side evaluated this as “lack of concrete support or assistance when it comes to the Albanian factor”. This was also interpreted as a signal to take appropriate measures on their own, after which government forces launched their anti-terrorist activities. In the beginning of the military campaign the village population was evacuated. The Albanian leaders in Tanushevtsi insisted that this be evaluated as a “humanitarian disaster”.

In spite of the initial denial that there was a connection between this crisis in the Republic of Macedonia and those in Kosovo and South Serbia, the political military circles began to discuss this possibility. It was considered that the crisis will be resolved with the consent of NATO, which at the time needed to strengthen its international forces in Kosovo and at the border with the Republic of Macedonia.

Additional problems encountered in securing the border drew in the Americans and the involvement of US military associates who were simultaneously in contact with the NLA and with the Macedonian forces. (According to data obtained by the Ministry of Defense). Later “the same group of US military advisers” who were in contact with the NLA also helped the Macedonian military. The well-known American company MPRI was led by Richard Griffiths, a retired general, who was on good terms with Agim Chehu, was helping the Albanians with their terrorist actions and was also involved with the armed forces in the Republic Macedonia in the so-called “Program for Stabilization and dissuasion”)

From the beginning of my involvement in the resolution of the crisis I realized that: if we continue to operate this way we will have serious problems resolving the crisis by military means using ARM military assets. The main reason for this was the top army leadership; it was against using APM. This is why, during the assembly of the top state leadership, when I was appointed Deputy Chief of Staff of General Headquarters I made my feelings known. In front of everyone at the assembly I said: “Mr. President, I will accept this responsibility, but I will require from you full authority regarding my engagement and you know that General Iovo Andreevski does not like to be my supervisor and only he alone knows why. Therefore, in the event of a dispute, I will ask that you make a final decision.” After I said that, General Iovo Andreevski called me to tell me something in his own style. He said: “General, if you are a soldier then stay there because my rank is Lieutenant Colonel.”

## EXECUTING THE TETOVO OPERATION

March 25, 2001 was a peaceful day. Tetovo was peaceful that Sunday morning. It was also the day when the clocks were changed; the time was shifted one hour forward to take advantage of daylight savings time. So the attack was actually scheduled to start at 6 A.M. by the old time to coincide with 7 A.M. in the new time. Because of the practicality of the plans, all activities were ordered to move 1 hour forward. Therefore, instead of 6 A.M., artillery preparation began at 7 A.M. and lasted 1 hour, strictly for selective purposes. While the artillery was preparing, the units moved to their initial attack positions and began to form a wide ring of encirclement. The simultaneously planned invasion began with the first wave leaving the airport so by 8 A.M. they took their positions in a circular form that was made into a wide ring. All the villages expected to hold terrorists were within the wide ring. These villages were: Dzhepchishte, Giermo, Brodets, Shipkovitsa, Popova Shapka, Gaire and Lisets, and certainly in the middle of all this was Kale.

By 09:00 hours in the morning the encirclement was complete except for some horse trails to Lake Karanikolichko over Shar Planina towards Kosovo and from the village Germo towards Kobilitsa to Kosovo. These paths were not fully secured because

they were controlled by helicopters, with aims at preventing the terrorists from possibly being reinforced from Kosovo, and to prevent their withdrawal to Kosovo.

The first phase of the encirclement was fiercely resisted from the villages Gaire and Shipkovitsa vicinity and thus the attack in that direction was temporarily stopped. The path to Popova Shapka was blocked by obstacles.

The special unit belonging to the Ministry of the Interior was engaged in that direction with its armoured vehicles, which at the very beginning was stopped. In addition to blocking the way, the terrorists opened fire with their infantry weapons from the last houses in Tetotovo near the cemetery. Then I remembered what Major General Iovo Andreevski had once said to me. He said: "Pande, the entire town will be shooting at us".

I figured that if we did not continue the attack in that direction, it would affect the morale of the others attacking from the other directions, so at 9 A.M. I ordered the reserve tank company to move in.

With our strong attack on the way to Tetovo, the terrorists in the village Shipkovitsa were scattered and we cleared the road obstacles and, as planned, surrounded Shipkovitsa. Our forces broke through the Shipkovitsa monastery above Kale. At the same time I ordered the use of tanks along the river Pena, along the road to the village Seltse. Our offensive was formidable in all directions, especially the special unit assault in the north of the village Germa, which was tasked with attacking Kale in Tetovo. The other three directions concentric to Kale also attacked as planned. There was general panic in the terrorist camp because they were simultaneously attacked from all directions. However, their escape route over Kobilitsa to Kosovo and Shar Planina was cut off at the very beginning.

Sabotaged, the terrorist groups were on the run with an unplanned withdrawal.

Some of the terrorists were able to withdraw to Lake Karanikolich in Kosovo over Kobilitsa along the forest paths towards Kosovo. Most



certainly they were from the Protection Corps, part of which retreated to the villages Poroj and Dzepchishte, took off their uniforms and threw away their arms. Most likely they were residents of the local population from the above-mentioned villages.

During the entire campaign the helicopters hampered their escape to Kosovo. After taking the Shipkov monastery we were overlooking Kale, the pillar of the terrorist defense. The terrorists in Kale gave us fierce resistance, were determined and well-fortified. The Kale configuration itself provided long and fierce resistance - It was difficult to take without losses on our part so more thinking was needed on how to win without any losses.

I decided to install two rings around Kale. So, around 14:00 hours, March 25, 2001, two rings encircled Kale but only in three directions. We failed to encircle the east side because the unit that was going to do the encircling was still engaged in its attack on the village Dzheptishte in the Vtosino locality. It had not finished its task because it had gone in the wrong direction, toward the village Germa. When we directed them to Vtosino, where they were expected to be, they were met with stiff resistance and were stopped, and did not cut a path to the villages Germa and Poroj. Because of that some terrorists fled towards the village Poroj.

Before nightfall Kale was completely surrounded and the terrorists were holding only the top of Kale. At 20:00 hours, part of the "Wolves" unit (a Special Forces unit of ARM), was sent to blow up the top and Kale facilities with bombs.

After Kale was taken, in March 25/26, 2001, the terrorist groups were completely smashed in that zone of combat in accordance with the operational plan for that day.

The success of achieving this operation during the first day was based primarily on the complete surprise of its execution, and of course on the great courage and professionalism of all the participants in the operation.

Besides that, corrections to the initial decisions were made in time to properly guide the units in their tactical procedures.

At 22:00 hours on March 25, 2001, I was called to go to Skopje and meet with the state leadership. At the meeting, besides President Boris Trajkovski, were Prime Minister Georgievski, Stoian Andov, Dosta Dimovska, Major General Iovo Andreevski and others.

President Boris Trajkovski immediately gave me the floor and asked me to bring everyone up to date with the situation at the front and to recommend what more needed to be done.

On March 25, 2001, Prime Minister Georgievski was in Tetovo and came to our command headquarters where he stayed for 2 hours, observing the operation. We familiarized him with all the details and he was particularly pleased that no one had been killed the first day; only 3 had sustained light wounds. That day Chief Iovo Andreevski stayed in his office and “followed the entire situation” from there. His greatest concern was that casualties on our part be maintained to a minimum.

After we were done with the first day’s operation, I proposed that we proceed with the plan of operation for the second day, clean up the entire terrain and take over the most significant tactical structures in the zone of operation.

On the night of March 25/26, 2001, I assumed the terrorist groups would attempt to find a way to slip through the ring and head for Kosovo or for the villages that were not cleaned up by our action and from there return to Tetovo.

President Boris Trajkovski was very pleased, especially since we had no losses and, with an honest expression, said to me: “General, last night I was very angry at you.” I then, in my own style, replied: “Mr. President, I understand perfectly. It is easy to sign an order to use military units - we have started a war on our own territory. The first step is always the hardest to take in everything, let alone start a war. I hope that further actions will be easier for you to approve.” (See Appendix 1). On March 26, 2001 our units captured all the tactical structures that we had planned to take and from there to control the entire area. Then, in collaboration with the police, we started cleaning up the terrain in Shar Planina and in all the villages.

When we cleaned up the area we found large quantities of weapons, clothing, food and other resources. Then and there I became aware of the drastic measures the terrorists had taken for a lengthy hold on the terrain. They had built underground bunkers, shelters and trenches for fighting and for rest. Kale itself was well-organized with trenches and shelters, which meant that the terrorists were planning to be there a long time and to wage long-term warfare.

In all this it is surprising that this entire defense system was built away from prying eyes. Such a project could not have been kept a secret. All this work that that took days and days to complete could not have gone unnoticed... especially the construction and the machinery, etc... And yet the competent authorities of the state had no information on this... This is inconceivable! Tactically speaking, the defense system we found was similar to or a copy of the Anglo-American military tactical systems for that level of defense.

Most of the civilian population evacuated the combat zone before the campaign started, many of those who remained left during the execution of the operation. But most of the population from the villages Seltse and Germa remained there, which led us to believe that the terrorists were certainly among those people.

On March 26, 2001 we blockaded the village Seltse and asked that it be monitored. As it turned out, there was a group of around 30 to 40 armed men hanging around the village mosque among the civilians, but were not attempting to act. Because of the presence of civilians we did not want to act either or to perform a classic attack. We did however maintain a ring around the village with nearby positions under strict military control.

On March 27, 2001 we gradually tightened the ring. Then, supported by ARM units, the police began a gradual advance on the road towards the village. After entering Seltse, the police completely cleared out the civilian population and we captured part of the terrorist group. In Seltse we found large caches of arms and ammunition, lists of terrorists who participated and other documentation. Thus, it became obvious to me that the village was a command post. (The terrorist command post for Tetovo Region was the village Seltse. After we took Seltse we seized a number of

documents, among which we found lists of the so-called “KLA” participants. The lists found here were kept in computer diskettes. In total we found 170 fighters designated for this region. The entire seizure of materials was delivered to the Ministry of Interior in Skopje.) With the successful completion of this action we managed to take over the entire area. Then from the village Germo I sent the NATO commander’s driver to Tetovo to offer the terrorists a voluntary surrender. In other words, release the civilian population from the village - which was immediately done.

The only places that still remained out of our reach in this region were the villages Poroj and Dzhepchishte, in which part of the terrorists on the first day of our operation managed to shed their uniforms and hide among the civilian population. Besides that, we had information that a foreign TV crew and foreign journalists were present in the village Poroj. Because of that, on March 27, 2001 at a meeting with the top state leadership, I proposed that we perform a clean up of the terrorists in those villages. I proposed that the cleaning be done by the police while ARM maintained a circle around them to prevent them from escaping. My proposal was immediately accepted and specific tasks were issued and delivered during the same day; March 27, 2001. Because of our initial successes, at the same time I suggested that we continue with the cleaning of Skopje Tsrna Gora. The proposal was fully accepted and consisted of the following:

a) Continue with the cleaning of the villages Poroj Dzhepchishte in the Tetovo battle zone, with most of the forces switching their focus to Skopje Tsrna Gora and terrain covering the villages Chashka, Krivenik/Radusha. I also informed my staff that my work in Tetovo was done and that no more work would be done and that Colonel Josip Boshevski and his command would continue to secure this sector. With this I committed myself to personally be engaged in Skopje Tsrna Gora Region.

My first order of business was to have the police investigate and clear out the villages Poroj and Dzheshchishte while ARM blockaded the villages. Dosta Dimovska, then Minister of the Interior, and Zvonko Kashirski, Director of Public safety, who were present at the meeting, fully agreed with my proposal. With the

proposal fully approved, Colonel Boshevski was given the task to surround the villages Poroi and Dzhepchishte and secure them after the police action was completed.

The action was to be carried out on March 27, 2001. That same day I was engaged in preparing the combat operation "MH - 1" involving the Skopje Tsrna Gora - Karadak zone.

On March 27, 2001, around 10:00 hours in the morning, Colonel Josip Boshevski called to tell me the following. He said: "General, the police are prematurely pulling out of Poroi; they were ordered to do so." I said: "Well, I don't know why they are retreating. I will inquire and get back to you. You are to continue with your task, as agreed." I called Zvonko Kashirski and said to him: "I have information that the police are pulling out from the village Poroi, is that true?" He immediately said: "I received orders from my boss Dosta Dimovska, Minister of the Interior, to withdraw from the village." I then asked him: "Zvonko did you do something stupid with the civilian population?!" He again immediately replied and said: "No, not at all! Those were my orders!" So I said: "Okay then, we will find out what happened at the meeting this evening!"

In the evening, during the top leadership meeting, before I began my presentation of the Skopje Tsrna Gora proposal, I asked for an explanation. I said: "Who ordered the police to pull out prematurely from the villages Poroi and Dzhepchishte? I do not know whether the President of the Republic of Macedonia was informed of this but I am sure that the Prime Minister was." Everyone present went silent. Dosta Dimovska approached me and quietly said: "General, what do you want, a civil war? We did not act in these villages during the combat operation because these citizens supported us during the operation." Because no one else responded, I no longer wished to discuss this so I said: "Yesterday evening you did approve this action wholeheartedly!" And I ended my inquiry with that. And as such, Poroi and Dzhepchishte remained bastions for the terrorists.

## **MILITARY OPERATION IN SKOPJE TSRNA GORA “MH - 1”**

After we completed the first day of our military campaign in Tetovo, the next day, March 26, 2001, we agreed with Major General Iovo Andreevski to start preparations for the campaign in Skopje Tsrna Gora where we were going to engage the First Army Corps - Kumanovo, which at the time had free resources and was available for that operation. Besides those, we also had other free military resources, primarily the intelligence battalion and the military police battalion. My goal was to use the success of the Tetovo operation and, on the whole, clean up the entire terrain up to the Kosovo border. My aim was to take control of all important buildings and communications connecting Kosovo to the Republic of Macedonia.

The same day, March 26, 2001, we agreed with Major General Iovo Andreevski to ask the Commander of the First Army Corps - Kumanovo to bring up the readiness status of his units and to propose a plan at the March 27, 2001 meeting before the top state leadership.

In his capacity as Chief of Staff of General Headquarters, Iovo Andreevski accepted the proposal since there were no other options put forward. I also told him that the same proposal would be brought up at the top state leadership meeting in the evening of the same day.

Late night on March 27, 2001 the following proposal was made to the top state leadership:

“Start preparations for carrying out the operation in the zone:

- Left: Villages Rasche and Iazhintse;
- Right: Kumanovo, village Tabanovtse, the deep ravine along the Kosovo border at Skopje Tsrna Gora.

The goal of the operation is to extract the terrorists from the designated area and take full control of that space.

First Army Corps - Kumanovo is to be engaged to perform this operation. As a carrier, the border brigade is to be reinforced with the scout battalion, military police battalion and all Ministry of Interior police forces in that region.

The main forces are to engage the terrorists of Skopje Tsrna Gora and the auxiliary forces are to engage them in the direction: Villages Kuchkovo and Chashka.

The operation is to be deployed in two phases: in phase I, vigorous actions in a circular form must take place to dissect, attack the terrorists and isolate them in the settlements where there are civilians. In phase II, with assistance from the Ministry of the Interior, we are to perform a thorough cleaning of the area and establish a fully functioning government.

Engaged in the operation will be:

- Attack Forces,
- Landing Forces,
- Fire support Forces, and
- Ground control Forces.

The 430 members of the Ministry of the Interior that were in the police station are to be engaged.”

The proposal was fully accepted by everyone who was present. It was then decided that we immediately start preparations for the operation and, on March 28, 2001, take the Plan to President Boris Trajkovski for his signature. I then asked everyone not to discuss the plan in public, primarily for the safety of our units and in order to achieve a surprise on the ground.

By noon, on March 27, 2001, the complete operational plan and accompanying documentation were ready and approved by President Boris Trajkovski, without any problems.

We had to work quickly, there was no time, we had to use the success of the “Tetovo combat operation” and in that context I spoke with Iovo Andreevski. I said: “Iovo, please help us out with the

auxiliary units in the direction of Kuchkovo and Chashka and I and my group will help out in Kumanovo.” Iovo replied: “Please General Pande, there are no terrorists in the Skopje Tsrna Gora vicinity.” So I said: “Iovo, there is nothing better than that. In that case we will take all the important topographic buildings and routes to Kosovo and we will hold the state of affairs of the entire region in our hands.”

According to the operational plan, in the evening and night of March 27, 2001 part of the units were required to perform a march and encircle the areas in question, especially the areas around the villages Tanushevtsi, Malino Maalo and Brest. Parts of the Kumanovo units were to march along the old road over the villages Umin Dol, Arachinovo and Ramno and take their attack positions.

In the afternoon of the same day, I was informed that the units from Kumanovo stopped the march in Skopje, stayed in the “Ilinden” barracks overnight and did not go directly to their positions. I got on the telephone, called the commander of the First Army Corps - Kumanovo and asked him: “Why were the units not taken directly to their designated locations. Why were they diverted and have remained in Skopje?” He said that there was a change in plan approved by Major General Iovo Andreevski, the Chief of staff of General Headquarters.

This was indeed very strange. The plan I was following was not only approved but Iovo Andreevski was not familiar with its detail. Also, before approving a change in the plan he was supposed to inform me. Nevertheless, in order to find out what was going on I contacted Iovo Andreevski directly and asked him: “Iovo, why did you authorize Major General Gorgi Karakutovski to change the plan regarding deployment of the units?” He said: “General Pande, I did not order the changes. It was Giorgi who proposed the amendment to the plan and the operation, I just accepted his recommendation.” Nervously I said “What does this have to do with you or with Giorgi Karakutovski? Do you not realize that we will be going to battle tomorrow?! These units are needed to prepare the ground for an offensive and not to sit in the barracks!” He then said: “But, General Pande, I did not know anything, Brigadier General Adil Gazafer is leading the units.” My answer to Iovo was: “Listen to me



General Lieutenant Colonel Iovo, you are to immediately order Major General Giorgi Karakutovski to continue the march with the units! I will have to inform President Boris Trajkovski about this, but you call Giorgi Karakutovski and ask him to come to General Headquarters at around 18:00 hours today so that, once again, I can spell out the specific tasks for tomorrow!”

Late in the afternoon I returned from the field and went to General Headquarters. I invited Major General Stamboliski into my office and asked him: “General Metodi Stamobliski, what happened to the units on the ground? Do you know why the units from Kumanovo were diverted to the “Ilinden” barracks in Skopje?” He said: “The military police units went according to plan, as ordered; the other units went in the direction of the villages Kuchkovo and Grachani.” In brief I then said: “Someone is intentionally screwing around with our preparations for the operation, but listen, early tomorrow morning I will be leaving for Kumanovo with some of the leadership and you stay here, at General Headquarters, and let’s keep in touch on a regular basis!”

A while later Brigadier General Dragan Andreevski and Major General Giorgi Karakutovski came to my office. I also invited General Lieutenant Colonel Iovo Andreevski to join us. By now I was calm because I was certain that the error that was made earlier with the units was corrected. So calmly, I once again went over the plans and repeated the steps that were needed to be taken by the auxiliary and main forces during the course of the next day. Eye to eye I then repeated to General Lieutenant Colonel Iovo Andreevski what we had spoken about over the telephone and emphasized to him: “Okay, General Iovo, Giorgi Karakutovski was your chief of staff in your Corps for many years, so you should know him well. I have never worked with him!” Chief Iovo then said: “Well, General Pande, he is quite shy and wants something all the time, he boasts about everything, and continuously sends telegrams.” I then said: “Well, now here in front of everyone I am going to again repeat the tasks for tomorrow and I expect you, as his chief of Staff, to become a little more involved!?” To this he said: “But Pande, everyone is trying to avoid me.” So I said: “Put that aside, a long night is ahead of us and tomorrow will be an even longer and more difficult day. I am leaving early tomorrow morning and I am going to Kumanovo, I

need you to go with Brigadier General Dragan Andreevski in the direction of the auxiliary forces.”

I asked Major General Giorgi Karakutovski to remain in my office and in front of Iovo Andreevski I slowly and calmly repeated the tasks for the next day’s operation and when I was done I said to both of them: “You still have enough time during the night to set up the initial positions as planned. The entire Corps command is at your disposal. Is there anything that is not clear about tomorrow’s operation? Or are there any problems?” Giorgi looked at me with a strange look and said: “General, everything is clear, the tasks will be carried out, now let us go!” I said: “Good, tomorrow at 05:00 hours I will be at your command post!” I called in Brigadier General Dragan Andreevski who was responsible for carrying out the attack using the auxiliary forces and, in a similar manner, went over the plans with him. I then asked General Metodi Stamboliski to remain in General Headquarters.

However, I soon realized that these officers now found themselves in a situation where they had to start a war with their own units, and everything was difficult in the beginning. They were responsible for the lives of their soldiers and officers; it was a great responsibility so they insisted on being there, present among them to help them better perform their task.

I called Major General Metodi Stamboliski again and asked him to come to my office. Once again we went over the overall situation for tomorrow to make sure that we didn’t accidentally miss something. After reviewing the situation I said to Major General Stamboliski: “I am worried about Major General Giorgi Karakutovski, I am not sure that he will get to his position on time as planned. We will need to fully engage ourselves, especially you, your staff and chiefs. I will take the chief of artillery and the chief of the armoured mechanized units with me and will go in Kumanovo.”

In the meantime I thought about how nervous I had been during the first military operation in Tetovo and the anxiety I experienced during the plan approval process and how this operation had problems from the start, problems that began with individuals, and how certain measures had to be taken and how direct command of

the units had to be assumed in order to achieve success. According to information available to us I did not expect serious resistance from the terrorists in Skopje Tsrna Gora Region, but my goal was: to plug up the escape route from Skopje Tsrna Gora to Kosovo and take over all routes and tactical facilities and establish full control of the region. I convinced myself that the terrorist problem in the Republic of Macedonia could be resolved in 10 to 15 days since the Tetovo operation was initiated on March 25, 2001. And not only was I convinced, but I had sufficient military capabilities to do it. ARM had enough forces to deal with the terrorists who then numbered no more than 200 to 250 in the entire region.

Command 1K - str. dov. no. 200-236 - March 28, 2001

URGENT

Regular operating report from 16:00 hours, March 27 to 04:00 hours, March 28, 2001

1 - Enemy Activities:

- At 14:30 hours a group of 12 uniformed persons were seen moving from the village Odzhachar towards the village Malina Maala.
- No special activities or movements of the terrorists were observed over the course of the night.

2 - 1K unit activities:

- Command and the 1K units, based on General Headquarters order (decision regarding the operation) str. dov. no. 07-35/123 from March 27, 2001, have completed all preparations for the execution of their designated tasks.
- At AP Krivolak shooting was completed with 6 service LFR 128 and all achieved excellent results.

3 - For the units and Corps engaged in providing d/g and training with the mobilized compositions, morale conditioning is necessary at the proper level.

4 - Requests:

-All requests are submitted with special documents.

JL/S  
COMMANDER  
Major General  
Giorgi Karakutovski

To be submitted to:

- Chief of General Headquarters of ARM

Report from the Commander of 1.AK (Karakutovski) for the level of combat readiness of the unit of operation MH-1

## EXECUTING THE OPERATION

On March 28, 2001, at 05:00 hours, a group of officers arrived at command point 1.AK - Kumanovo.

My first order of business was to find out if all the units had arrived and occupied their positions according to plan. I was happy to find out that everything was in order and that the units were where they were supposed to be. I was particularly interested to know if the Third Infantry Brigade had closed the space, as per tactic 3.(TG3), from villages Belanovats - Zlokukianie and cut off the road leading to Stanchich Watchtower (to Kosovo's territory). To find out about that I telephoned the Commander of 3.PBR, Colonel Chedo Krstevski, and briefly asked him: "Chedo, where are your units?" When he said: "We are now starting to head to our initial positions," I could not believe it. "We were ordered to be at our positions at 06:00 hours," he reported. It then became clear to me: the operation was expected to commence at 06:00 hours but these units had not yet arrived at their initial positions. They had not used the cover of night to take their positions. This meant that the units of 1.AK TG-3, which had the task of closing the Kumanovo-Kosovo corridor, had not done their job. And probably neither had the 1.AK military police battalion which, through the cover of night, was expected to pass through the village Otlia and take its position northeast of the same village and be ready to attack towards the village Strima and directly aid with the raids to be carried out at Red Kamen - Vukson TT - 1333.

I left the operations room where we had gathered with everyone in it, including the officers and commanders of the First AK, so that I would not cause a scandal. Colonel Gene Stanojkovski, who was with me in the capacity of Chief of OME, said: "General, come with me, don't be nervous, calm down, you will have to delay the attack." But before postponing the attack I had a talk with President Boris Trajkovski. In short I explained to him what had happened and asked him to postpone the attack for only 2 hours. This was enough time for the commanders to take their positions and issue instructions and orders to their subordinates. President Boris Trajkovski approved the change and the attack was now scheduled to begin at 08:00 hours.

The remaining units which were expected to close the space from the west and north eventually did. These were the TG - 1 battalion of the military police from General Headquarters and the landing forces. They were all ordered to begin the attack in all directions at 08:00 hours.

Besides all this, at 05:30 hours I received reports from all commanders that there were TV crews at all the intersections and roads that led to Skopje Tsrna Gora. Even though the attack was delayed by two hours I began to wonder if it was worth starting it if it was going to fail. Obviously our plan had been discovered; even the exact starting time of the attack was made obvious.

Appointed as commander of the operational tactical group (OTG-1) was Colonel Liuben Kostovski. Lieutenant Marian Giorgievski was appointed as his deputy and was tasked, with his units, to attack from the north towards the south, i.e. from the village Brest towards Lake Lipkovo. Commander of TG-1 was Brigadier General Adil Gazafer, I recognized his voice over the radio. I called Major General Giorgi Karakutovski and asked him: "Giorgi, who is in command of OTG-1?" He said: "Colonels Liuben Kostovski and Marian Giorgievski". So I asked him: "What is Brigadier General Adil Gazafer doing there when you told me he was in the barracks in Kumanovo preparing the units?" He did not answer. He then stormed out of the operations room and in the hallway he contacted Brigadier General Adil Gazafer on his cell phone and said: "I told you to stay off the radio, you understand? Pande Maikal!" By that he meant that I was listening. When he returned I smiled at him cynically and said: "A war cannot be conducted this way!" We pulled out Brigadier General Adil Gazafer so that he no longer participated in this operation for his personal protection and to avoid consequences for his family, even though he was Commander of the First Brigade and, for that reason, his deputy Marian Giorgievski became involved with TG-1.

In spite of what was happening, even though I had earlier thought that we would not encounter serious resistance, I now felt that the operation was no longer a secret and that the terrorists, in time, would be escaping to Kosovo through the village Stanchich. But no

matter, the operation had to be realized. To do that, we would have to keep our eyes on all the routes leading to Kosovo from the Republic of Macedonia through Skopje Tsrna Gora. This way the terrorists would be isolated in the villages on the southern slopes of Skopje Tsrna Gora.

On March 29, 2001, at 08:00 hours, we began the combat operation. The landing in the "Tsrni Kamen" TT-1322 Region was completed with the forces of the Sixth Squad. The Military Police Battalion from General Headquarters started its attack in the direction of Ramno - Mulianka Mala, The OTG-1 (Operational Tactical Group - 1) began to move from Malina Maala towards the village Goshintse and Lake Lipkovo, so that the area could be encircled from the west and north sides without much resistance from the terrorists.

Operational - tactical group 3, whose task was to attack from the south and the east, in order to close the circle and begin the attack from Slupchane - Dumanovtse, from the east towards the villages Izvor and Belanovtse, unfortunately failed to close off this direction and as such the road to Zlokukiane and Stanchich was not closed. The Military Police Battalion of the First Army Corps (1AK) was to attack from the village Otlia towards the village Strima and later to assist the landing forces of the Sixth Squad and completely close off that direction. Because of the delay on the part of 1AK units in bringing certain areas under control in order to prevent the terrorist groups from escaping, I decided to make some adjustments to the original plan.

For me the village Otlia was strategically very important. The communication lines from Strima towards Otlia and Lipkovo were free for the terrorists. And because we were not able to close them off I ordered my units to continue attacking from the north and close off the villages Otlia and Lipkovo from the north side. At the same time we were to occupy the village Alasevtse and break the communication line between the villages Brest and Alasevtse and take control of Lake Lipkovo, then use the 25 Ministry of Interior police officers to secure the dam.

We implemented the correction to the plan, except we were unable to quickly close off the village Otlia from the north and the section of the village Stanchich in the direction of Kosovo.

Later, as it turned out, the largest part of the terrorist group escaped through Stanchich to Kosovo, and some parts of it hid in the village Otlia.

One group of about 20 terrorists, belonging to the wider region of the villages Glasnie and Dumanovtse, failed to extract itself in time and was defeated at Dumanovachki Rid.

At 21:00 hours that same evening, as usual, we had a meeting with the state leadership. Besides President Boris Trajkovski, present were Prime Minister Georgievski, Stoian Andov, Dosta Dimovska, Liuben Paunovski, Iovo Andreevski and Zvonko Kashirski. I was up first and briefed everyone on the situation and on how the operation went. Right from the start I informed everyone that the operation had been compromised and that our plan had been discovered by the enemy. I then asked the President to conduct a full investigation of what really happened! I emphasized that, outside of us here who were present at this meeting no one else knew when and how the operation was going to be done, especially about the timing of the attack. I said: "How did the TV crews and journalists know to be present at 05:30 hours, in the general area where the operation was going to take place? How did it happen that the Commander of the military police battalion from General Headquarters, Captain Liupco Mirchevski, got lost on the road to the village Ramno - Mulinska Maala, especially after the units occupied Mulinska Maala and he was to take control? How did someone, after the units attacked, place mines on the road and not before or during the hostilities. Most of the terrorists left for Kosovo the day before and during the course of the operation only part of the group managed to flee to the village Otlia and another part fled for Dumanovachki Rid."

Major General Iovo Andreevski, who never said anything, reacted and spoke out of turn. He said: "I knew that there were no terrorists there!" I then asked him: "How did you know there were no terrorists there? Was it because you thought you had defeated them all in the villages Tanushevtsi and Malina Maala?!" Major Rizevski, Assistant to the Minister of Defense, without being asked said: "The plan was no good, we, instead of chasing them to Kosovo, chased them to Prilep." He mentioned Prilep because he was originally



from Prilep. I had had enough from everyone so I said: “Major, you need to focus on your own work! You are neither educated nor qualified for this job! We need to find out who the traitors are and who informed the terrorists of our strategy.”

President Boris Trajkovski promised to put a commission together to investigate the case.

The operation, nonetheless, was realized successfully and the villages on the southern slopes of Skopje Tsrna Gora were isolated. The roads leading to Kosovo were closed and the terrain in Chashka and Radusha vicinity were cleared of terrorists. The entire region fell under the control of ARM and the Ministry of Interior police forces. And as such the entire Skopje Tsrna Gora Region was fully secured and under our control. Police stations were set up in the following villages: Gorian, Baniani, Pobuzhie, Liuboten, Strachintse, Mateiche, Nikushtak, Lipkovo, Lipkovo Lake dam, Opaе, Vaksintse, on the western part of Dolno Blatse, Kuchovo, Radusha and other places.

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1K Command - Str.dov.no.200-248 - March 29, 2001 - KM - Kumanovo

Operational Report Period - 18:00 hours, March 28, 2001 to 04:00 hours March 29, 2001.

1- No specific combat activities were observed on the part of the terrorists during the evening and night.

- In the course of the night they probably mined essential roads and regrouped for further action after being surrounded by our forces

- Most probably they will regroup in the areas Lukar Maala, Maliok Maala in Goshintse, the building Demirski Rid and Muliska Maala in the village Brest.

On March 28, 2001 around 17:00 hours, while our forces were attempting to extract the dead and wounded members of our unit in

Kika (1512 mm) Region, the enemy attacked from all sides with infantry weapons.

2.1 - On March 28, 2001 around 16:45 hours, Captain Liupcho Mirchevski was killed when a planted mine exploded. Injured were Kostov Petre, Ilievski Blagoicho, Ivanov Tasho, Miloshevski Petso and Karaliovski Borche. This took place in Kika (1512 mm) Region.

All are members of ARM 3/2.bVP in General Headquarters.

They were extracted and transported by helicopter to the Skopje CVZU treatment centre.

2.2 On March 28, 2001 at 18.30 hours our units received air support from two combat helicopters during a skirmish in the area of Demirski hill (945 mm) and fire support from MFB 120 mm 2/3 mtbr in the same area.

2.3 - Around 19:00 hours an operational schedule for the forces to take their lines and decide on further action was produced by OTG-2.

2.4 - TG-2 forces continue to control the Kumanovo - Arachinovo road.

2.5 Around 20:00 hours the TG-1 commander informed that RRF 90 mm equipment and ammunition was seized and taken to the warehouse in the village Tanushevtsi.

Operating Report for combat actions on March 28 and 29, 2001

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For as long as there was political will, the crisis in the Republic of Macedonia could have been entirely resolved in April 2001, with ARM and the Ministry of the Interior, by military and political means. But after the operation in Skopje Tsrna Gora, ARM, for the entire month of April, remained engaged in the positions it took in Tetovo, Shar Planina, Skopje Tsrna Gora and Karadak Regions. During the occasional meetings we had with top officials from the

Intelligence Agency headed by Dragi Grozdanovski and with Goran Mitevski, director of intelligence for the Interior Ministry, we were obtaining frightening information.

In May 2001, according to the information we received from the various Intelligence Agencies, in the April - May period around 50,000 terrorists were observed entering the Republic of Macedonia. This information was given to us by "friendly sources" - mainly by the British and Americans. I remember being in a meeting when Goran Mitevski, in front of President Boris Trajkovski, informed us that during the night 500-600 terrorists entered the village Loiane from Yugoslavia. He obtained this information from the British Intelligence Service. The day before, Lt. General Chaslav Krstich commander on the Yugoslav forces responsible for smashing the so-called OVPMB (Liberation Army of Presevo Valley - Presevo, Bujanovats and Medvedja), informed me that a group of 6 to 8 terrorists was seen moving from the village Miratovtsi (Yugoslavia) to the village Loiane. At the meeting when Goran Mitevski mentioned 500 to 600 terrorists I had in mind 6 to 8 because that's we found out when we had it checked out. Besides this information we were continuously being bombarded with information that an uprising was being prepared in Gostivar, Kichevo, Debar, etc. Top government officials were certainly receiving this kind of intimidating "information" and being coerced to solve the conflict by negotiations and with compromises. This was done after ARM had already accepted the task of resolving the terrorist problem in the Republic of Macedonia by military means.

During the first Tetovo operation I received information that there were 200 to 250 terrorists at Kaleto, but the actual number was only twenty. In fact there were only 160 to 170 lightly armed persons in the entire region. There never were more than 7 to 8 masked terrorists observed on the move at one time. The groups crossing the border from Kosovo to the Republic of Macedonia also numbered about the same.

After the Skopje Tsrna Gora operation, small groups of terrorists hid among the population in the villages Otlia, Opae, Vaksintse, Slupchane and Orizare. These were small groups which, throughout

the month of April, did not take any action but were preparing the population for further aggression.

The public was well aware of what was happening on the political scene during the month of April 2001, but I am not authorized and am insufficiently informed to write about the overall political developments and the choices the wider coalition government made - I was only sure that, because of that, the security forces in the Republic of Macedonia were not used, except to retain the positions we took from March 25 to March 30, 2001.

In April 2001, the Army of the Republic of Macedonia was put through an intensive training program. The reserves were being trained in order to establish more units in case there was deterioration in the situation. As units were formed and trained, they were stationed in the entire area along the western border from Gostivar - Mavrovo - Debar to Struga and Kichevo and to the Strazha bend. In the western part of the Republic of Macedonia, the terrorist groups had little space to manoeuvre because the entire area was under ARM control. The most difficult terrain in Shar Planina was covered with intelligence groups, above all Popova Shapka, Dupen Kamen and the villages Veitse and Bozovtse. Using part of 2AK (Second Army Corps), the border with Albania (from Strezimir to Korab and the villages Grekai and Ribnitsa) was closed. The space stretching along the villages Iazhintse - Radusha was closed off by the General Headquarters Investigative battalion. The zone along the Tetovo - Poroi - Iazhintse road up to the Iazhintse Watchtower was placed under the control of the Interior Ministry's police forces (with about 400 officers). The area along the villages Iazhintse and Radusha and along the border of Skopje Tsrna Gora to the village Miratovtsi (the Shorta observation) north from the village Loiane was under the full control of our security forces. No terrorists appeared in these areas.

## **KUMANOVO OPERATION “MH - 2”**

For Kumanovo, or Karadak Region, we had no plan, nor did we intend to prepare and justify a military operation. After the Skopje Tsrna Gora operation the following villages remained free: Loiane, Vaksintse, Slupchane, Otlia and Mateiche, itself located at the foot of Skopje Tsrna Gora, i.e. 10 to 15 km northwest of Kumanovo. All residents of the aforementioned villages were living free, traveling and working in the cities Kumanovo and Skopje. The old road from Loiane through Mateiche - Umin Dol - Arachinovo was free of traffic. The space north of all the aforementioned villages was under the control of the Army and the Interior Ministry.

In this entire space that covered the aforementioned villages and the village Lipkovo, as their municipal centre, there lived over 25,000 inhabitants, mostly of Albanian nationality.

It is especially interesting to note that almost all of the information that the Intelligence and Counterintelligence Agencies in the Republic of Macedonia received was about uprisings by Albanian citizens in Gostivar, Debar and even Kichevo. The Agencies had no information that would indicate that something was amiss on the southern slopes of Skopje Tsrna Gora, especially in Lipkovo. The Chief of the Interior Ministry in Kumanovo handled all information about what was happening in the villages Loiane, Vaksintse, Slupchane, Otlia, etc.

ARM had no data for preparations, particularly with arranging defense for the villages. ARM units were providing security outside of the villages from Skopje Tsrna Gora up to the Kosovo, Yugoslav border, especially on the roads of the villages from Izvor to Zlokukiane and from Slupchane to Dumanovtse. There was no movement at all in the village Tanushevtsi except for ARM vehicles. There were not many local inhabitants in Karadak and most of them were elderly. After the Skopje Tsrna Gora operation, i.e. Karadak Region, particularly in Brest, Malina Maala, Goshintse, Dumanovtse, Belanovats, by decision of the Republic of Macedonia's Government, the border zone was extended to 10 km and ARM fully occupied and took full control of that space. The last point that ARM controlled was the temporary Shotra observation

facility (684 m.) located between the villages Loiane and Miratovats (in Yugoslav territory) from which, among other things, the old road from the village Loia to Mitrovats, Yugoslavia was observed. In fact, that part of the Yugoslav border was guarded by Yugoslav army border guards. KFOR troops on Yugoslavia's territory controlled the watchtower in the village Stanchich (D. Zlokukjane).

The roads were open and operated normally and the people in the Skopje Tsrna Gora villages lived normal lives throughout the entire month of April 2001. ARM units, located north of the designated villages, interacted with the villagers on a daily basis.

At the end of April 2001, with the death of two soldiers and the capture of a soldier in the village Vaksintse, our enemy opened our eyes and forced us to focus our attention on what was going on with the people in the villages Loiane, Vaksintse, Slupchane, Orizare, Otlia and Lopate.

The murder of two of our soldiers was a "cowardly" act committed in the village Vaksintse when the patrol was returning from the Shotra observation post to Kumnovo. Then, instead of calling it for what it was, some public circles and some "friendly" western media services called it "a criminal act committed by some crazed criminals and not by members of the KLA". Similarly, they also alluded that the soldier who was taken prisoner had been taken to Skopje. All these developments motivated us to become more interested in the Kumanovo - Karadak Regions, especially the settlements along the old road leading from Yugoslavia to Mateiche - Umin Dol.

The day after our two soldiers were murdered and the one captured in Vaksintse, Colonel Robert E. Lynch, American Military Attaché accredited in the Republic of Macedonia, wanted to see me. I immediately received him. During our conversation he began to convince me that our soldiers, murdered in the village Vaksintse, were killed by criminals. He even told me the name of one of the perpetrators. He then asked me not to allow ARM to take measures because the peaceful citizens living there did not approve of what the perpetrators of this insidious act had done. I may have reacted a bit harshly during our conversation but I simply said: "Colonel, you

brought special forces from the U.S. to free a single captured pilot in Bosnia, do you seriously think that our captured soldier is worth any less?! What would you do if two of your soldiers were killed in the same way!?” In the end I told him that it was my decision in regards to what ARM was going to do - and whatever it was, I said, I was going to propose it to the President of the Republic of Macedonia at our meeting that evening. If he accepts the proposal, I will carry it out. I then asked him: “Why are you talking to me about all this, you should be talking to Chief of Staff General Iovo Andreevski.” He then said: “I did speak with Chief Iovo and he sent me to talk to you.”

On May 2, 2001, at an appointment in Kumanovo, I met with Lieutenant General Chaslav Krstich, Commander of the Yugoslav forces for smashing the so-called OVPBM (Liberation Army of Presevo Valley - Presevo, Bujanovats and Medvedja), otherwise a colleague of mine from Kosovo (he was a commander in Mitrovitsa and I was a commander in Prishtina). It was a secret meeting about which only the President and Prime Minister of the Republic of Macedonia knew.

The topic of conversation was; exchange of mutual information in connection to the so-called NLA; when Yugoslav forces were going to enter Presevo Dolina; and if Lieutenant General Chaslav Krstich was planning to enter Presevo Dolina on May 25, 2001. I also wanted to know if we needed to do something about the overspill from actions against the OVPBM. Because Lieutenant General Krstich was commander of the operation and had experience in Kosovo from 2 years before, we spoke about professional issues in relation to the execution of an operation against the terrorists and other issues.

At the end of the meeting we concluded that: if we are to plan an operation for Karadak Region, it should be executed by May 25, 2001 while the so-called OVPBM (Liberation Army of Presevo Valley - Presevo, Bujanovats and Medvedja), was still idle. After May 25, 2001 we should be expecting an overflow from the OVPBM forces into Macedonia - i.e. after the Yugoslav army enters that region the enemy would be fleeing into the Republic of Macedonia.

From what we knew and the knowledge we possessed, we figured that we had ample time to plan a complex operation in Karadak Region - Kumanovo. However, due to the incident we experienced in the village Vaksinte we decided to accelerate the decision-making process.

I spent a few days with my colleagues studying the terrain in this region even though I was already familiar with it (from when I had been with the Yugoslav army. At that time the entire southern edge was fortified to defend Kumanovo valley from aggression originating from the east, after the strike defensive position, there were also positions set up on the southern slopes of the Skopje Tsrna Gora - Karadak Regions). In this region there was a unique communications corridor from Kumanovo through Skopje Tsrna Gora, a thoroughfare that connected Kumanovo with the villages Lopate - Slupchane - Izvor - Belanovtse. Ever since the first operation, which took place in that region on March 29, 2001, we knew the importance of that road, especially the branch that extended north to the village Slupchane in the Alasevtse vicinity where we had stationed part of the ARM forces and assets such as tanks, infantry and artillery. North of the village Alasevtse we had the OTG-1 forces which were responsible for providing security to the Malino Maala - Belanovats area. In other words, we had created a semi-circle from north to south around all the villages along the old road from the village Loiane to the village Mateiche.

If we were to perform an operation, our aim would be to fully connect the north with the south regions and merge our forces to the position where OTG-1 was located.

Our biggest problem, the one that weighed on us the most about such an operation, was the civilian population. This space, along with the terrorists, was inhabited by about 20,000 to 25,000 people. According to information we possessed, about 20 to 25 terrorists existed in every village in Lipkovo municipality with Slupchane as their typical stronghold:

The terrorists alone were not a problem for ARM. The problem was the civilian population and what to do with it, where to move it,



because there would be many civilian casualties if we acted under these circumstances.

We were pressured by the international community not to take serious action in that region because there was potential that many civilians would become victims. Basically, there was a change in the way the terrorists behaved in the villages since the previous actions that we had taken against them. They were now scattered everywhere and did not venture outside of the settlements. They came to the villages to convince the civilian population to play the role of hostages and to declare this region a “free territory”. This occurrence happened to coincide with the formation of the joint NLA and OVPBM (Liberation Army of Presevo Valley - Presevo, Bujanovats and Medvedja) command in Gnilane in early May 2001.

(According to the written material in our possession, among other things, it was said that: “In early May 2001 the joint NLA and OVPMB command was formed for the coordination of actions across the entire region. Its reserve headquarters were located in Lipkovo. At the end of the meeting when all this took place, it was concluded that:

1. The “NLA” should connect together all terrorist groups.
2. A free territory should be created similar to the free Kosovo security zone in Serbia (KZB).
3. An organization should be created to participate in negotiations regarding the future status of the Republic of Macedonia.
4. Help and reinforcements for these tasks should be obtained from Kosovo from the Prizren and Bitina training centres (400-500). There are also 900 people available from the training centres in the villages Iunak and Paprachane allocated for the border of the Republic of Macedonia and for the Kosovo and Serbia border. NLA and OVPBM Volunteers will also be sent, etc.
5. Before May 25, 2001 “OVPMB” will plan: KZB (Kosovo Security Zone in southern Serbia) sector B, after Serb forces penetrate, will perform extractions in two directions:

First direction - Kosovo; Second direction - Northern Macedonia.

... “The international community (the US, European Union and NATO) will further coordinate activities to keep events in the Republic of Macedonia under control, allowing only limited actions on the part of the Republic of Macedonia’s security forces while simultaneously putting pressure on the Government of the Republic Macedonia to allow greater concessions to the Albanians.”

... “The international community will not allow close cooperation, especially military cooperation, between the Republic of Macedonia and Yugoslavia in opposing Albanian extremism for the sake of holding Yugoslavia under control and to harness Russia’s influence in this region.”)

However, we decided to plan an operation, primarily as a warning that we were serious if they did not hand over the captured soldier held in the village Vaksintse.

The idea behind the operation was: To hatch a military plan for the zone to the right: the villages Loiane and Strazha. To the left: the villages Mateiche and Strima. For the main forces to engage in the direction of the villages: Opae - Lopate - Orizare - Slupchane - Alasevtse and the subsidiary villages Vaksintse and Strazha.

The aim of the operation was to penetrate between the villages Slupchane and Lipkovo and to merge with the forces in the village Alasevtse and the villages along the old road in order to isolate the communication corridors and, in the second phase, perform terrorist clean-up in the villages.

The plan was accepted in its entirety with the condition that before the operation was started it would be publicized, by all means possible, and inform the population so that it could evacuate.

Along with the announcements there was also an ultimatum given to the village Vaksintse to hand over the captured soldier. Because of the seriousness of the situation, when the captured soldier was not handed over within the specified time we began to conduct cautionary actions in the village Vaksintse on May 3, 2001. These

actions were carried on outside of the village - in certain combat areas.

All these actions were carried out while we were still preparing for the upcoming military operation and to warn the population to leave the villages. Due to the large number of residents present in the villages, the top state leadership had agreed not to perform a classic type combat operation. The terrorists were certainly hiding among the people, holding them hostage and refusing to let them leave. A small number of people, mostly women and children, fled their villages. When questioned they told us that armed men were present in their villages. These men spoke a strange language and asked the people to pay a certain amount of money before they would be allowed to leave. In addition to that we found out that the residents in these villages were harassed, abused, robbed and some were even raped.

We asked the International Red Cross to assist us with the evacuation of people, but that produced no results.

We could no longer wait, the decision to conduct the operation was approved by the President of the Republic of Macedonia and was scheduled to start on May 8, 2001. During the evening of May 7, 2001, Zvonko Kashirski, Director of Public Safety from the Interior Ministry, called me and said: "General, I was asked to go to the British Embassy where they gave me a videotape of the entire area in front of the villages Orizari, Slupchane and Vaksintse and on it there are things that will surprise you!" I said: "Come over to General Headquarters and bring the tape with you!"

Around 20:00 hours, on May 7, 2001, Zvonko Kashirski arrived and we watched the videotape in the office of the Chief of Staff. Present were myself, Iovo Andreevski and Zvonko Kashirski. The moment the tape began to roll, I recognized the terrain: the villages were recorded in advance from the front and from the back including places and roads - mostly belonging to the villages Otlia, Slupchane and Vaksintse.

It was scary to watch - the entire terrain was covered with modern anti-tank obstacles, minefields, trenches, etc. I said to Zvonko

Kashirski: "If this is true and the entire terrain is really covered with obstacles like it is shown here, then NATO must have put them there. NATO is the only one that possesses such equipment. I am not sure that the terrorists possess this kind of equipment!" Iovo Andreevski, as an expert engineer, said: "It was certainly placed there intentionally because conditions were favourable. I cannot dispute that, but nowadays our forces will uncover something from everything we saw on this tape." After our discussions and reviews, I asked everyone to keep the videotape a secret and not tell anyone. Zvonko Kashirski then said: "General Pande, all my people already saw the tape." So I asked him: "Who are all these people of yours?" He said: "General Risto Galevski, Zoran Iovanovski and others."

I thought about it while going back to my office. We will begin the attack tomorrow morning and if what we saw on the videotape was true, then we would have many casualties. On the tape I saw that the road passing through the village Slupchane to the exit, or to the playground, was completely mined with anti-tank mines. I was thinking of contacting President Boris Trajkovski, to inform him and seek a postponement for the operation, but I changed my mind: How do I delay it, what will I say to the commanders who are expected to start the operation tomorrow at 06:00 hours? I was sure President Trajkovski would immediately accept my request to delay it; that would not be a problem. Questions like these going through my mind kept me awake all night. I contacted several of the commanders on the ground and asked them about the situation in the field. They had seen nothing of what we were shown on the tape. There was nothing on the roads... With every question I asked I got a response that was different than on the tape. The only unusual thing they reported was a deep pit dug in the village Slupchane. It was covered with a large iron plate so that vehicles could pass over it.

On May 8, 2001, at 05:00 hours, I was at our command post in Kumanovo.

After I was briefed by the commanders on the ground situation and troop readiness, I withdrew from the operations room and went to my office. It was raining that day and fog covered the villages Slupchane and Vaksintse. Following the operational plan we had

planned to land helicopters north of the village Vaksintse in order to close off the terrorists from escaping on horseback towards Strazha and thus completely close off the wider ring. Unfortunately, because of the fog we could not carry out that task. I used this opportunity however, after consulting with President Trajkovski, to delay the attack for two hours while the fog lifted. Trajkovski was a reasonable person. He said: "General, you decide when to make your move, just let me know."

I told no one about the videotape, but I did call Giorgi Karakutovski to let him know that the attack was postponed for 2 hours and gave him additional tasks to prepare an artillery exercise along the road through the village Slupchane, which was to last one hour and thus, if there were any anti-tank mines, they would be activated.

For the artillery preparation I ordered the use of 105 m/m, 122 m/m artillery, 128 m/m launchers and 120 m/m mortars. I ordered the carpet bombing to begin at the Slupchane Well in the village Slupchane, along the road to the playground. I did not tell them why I wanted this done, I just said that because the tanks were going to take that route, to make sure the road was not mined.

At 07:00 hours Giorgi Karakutovski showed up again and brought me a telegram sent by Iovo Andreevski from General Headquarters - he said: "General, have a look and see what the telegram says." The orders were for me and for Karakutovski prohibiting us from carrying out any action in the villages and prohibiting any kind of actions that would cause civilian casualties. "For which I hold General Pande Petrovski and General Giorgi Karakutovski responsible," he said. The signature of the telegram read:

Chief of Staff of General Headquarters Lt. General Pande Petrovski and was signed by Iovo Andreevski !!

I said to Karakutovski: "I know that I am Deputy Chief of General Staff and not Chief!" We both smiled and I said: "Go do your work and don't worry. The only person that can undo this plan is the one who approved it!" I was referring to the President of the Republic of Macedonia and not to the Chief of Staff - who is not even familiar with the plan. "Look, he put my name on it and he signed it!" I said.

At 07:30 hours I called in Colonel Stoian Petrovski, head of G-2 intelligence in General Headquarters, and Colonel S. Zengovski, commander of the ARM Special Forces.

I immediately asked them: “Do you, as professionals have any knowledge of what has been set up in front of the villages Vaksintse, Slupchane and Orizari?” Both said that so far they had only seen an uncovered ditch in front of the village Slupchane and when they wanted to pass over it, they had to put down the large sheet of metal to serve as a bridge.

I then told them: “Last night I saw a videotape given to us by the British Intelligence Service which showed me differently, tell me should we go on the attack or not?” Both kept looking at me in silence. “Say something!” I said. “Why are you silent? Is there any truth to all this? If there is then tell me because you will be responsible!” It was cloudy, rainy and gloomy outside but I kept watch on the sky, I then noticed that it was clearing over Skopje Tsrna Gora. It is already 07:55 hours when I ordered: “Gentlemen, we are going to attack according to plan but with a two hour delay!”

We went down to the operations room so that I could issue the order to start the attack.

## **EXECUTING OPERATION “MH - 2”**

Artillery preparation began at 08:00 hours with aims at de-mining the area.

The units went on the attack. One mechanized company was attacking from the side and providing faster penetration for the main forces, which were to aggressively attack in the direction of the village Liubodrag towards the villages Lopate and Orazire during the artillery preparation. And one tank and one mechanized company attacked the village Vaksintse and blocked the village Loiane with a mechanized company reinforced with a tank platoon.

Besides the ARM units being involved in the operation, there were also 480 police officers involved throughout the entire area ready to clean up the villages and secure the roads. The dam at Lipkovo Lake was secured by 27 SVR Kumanovo police officers. And the regular police station from the village Mateiche took control of the road from Skopje connecting the villages Arachinovo with Mateiche and Lipkovo with Mateiche.

The operation began with an all out attack in all directions against the designated villages, especially in the direction of the villages Opae, Orizare and Slupchane.

Throughout this entire time I expected my commanders to report to me that they had run into minefields and anti-tank obstacles. But there were no such reports. The operation went as planned. Unfortunately, due to bad weather conditions, landing was not possible. So we used the combat helicopters to go after the terrorists fleeing north from the villages Vaksintse and Slupchane, i.e. Kodra Mala and Slupchane River.

At 10:00 hours, I, together with Colonel Blagoia Markovski, Stoiche Zengovski and our security team, went to the front line, i.e. to within 1 km of the village Slupchane - k. 376. That morning at dawn, what I witnessed and experienced left me traumatized. I heard terrible screaming, crying and wailing coming from the villages Orizare and Slupchane. It was still raining and soon afterwards we returned to our command post.

At 12:00 hours our units had already reached the entrance of the villages Slupchane, Orizare and Vaksintse and secured the roads to Vaksintse, Slupchane and Orizare, thus cutting off the villages from one another. The villages were separated from one another by ARM units. The tanks proceeded in the direction towards Blagun from the east side of the village Slupchane. The units from the village Alashevtse, at the start of the Alashevtse - Slupchane road, launched an attack north of Slupchane near the pine forest. Any attempt to flee in this direction, on the part of the terrorists, would be in vain. The villages Opae, Lopate and Loiane were taken and the villages Orizare and Slupchane were surrounded. Traffic was cut off in the entire area between these villages.

About 13:00 hours, Prime Minister Georgievski arrived at our command post in Kumanovo.

After he joined us in the operations room I informed him of our progress with implementing the operation and the current situation. He was pleased with our progress, success, the actions of the units at the front line and the total military action in general. In addition he personally oversaw the military actions in the villages Slupchane and Vaksintse. He sat in the operations room and examined the entire campaign theater. He was particularly interested in the front of the villages Vaksintse and Slupchane and the space between them.

According to the reports coming from the commanders, personal observations and reports from the Interior Ministry, there was general panic among the terrorists and they were on the run. I remember Zvonko Kashirski shouting: "Hey, they are fleeing to the forests and some are running for Kumanovo!"

At one point, one of Prime Minister Georgievski's aides gave the Prime Minister his cellular telephone. After he spoke for a while the Prime Minister turned towards me and said: "General Pande, we must stop the operation!" I looked at him and said: "What, stop the operation?!" He looked at me and said: "Stop the action!" I looked back at him and said: "Hang up your telephone; we need to finish the operation, not stop it. I don't even know what that means!?"



The Prime Minister left the operations room where we were and about 5 to 10 minutes later he came back and said: "Dosta Dimovska called me. She received a call from Arben Xhaferi who told her: 'You are causing many casualties with what you are doing. There are many casualties including civilians - women, children, etc.'..." I looked at him and immediately realized what had gone on at the front after the attack began - but I replied to him anyway. I said: "I can only terminate the operation by orders from my Supreme Commander!" The Prime Minister and his group left for Skopje, and we continued with our actions. About 10 minutes later I received a call from President Boris Trajkovski. He said: "General, what are you doing there?" Expecting that he had already been informed, I said: "Well Mr. President we are playing ball!!" He then said: "Do you know that several citizens called me and told me that you are causing many civilian casualties in this region? Stop the operation immediately and return the units to their initial positions!" I said to him: "I understand Mr. President, but I have no such data, I only know that the terrorist gangs are in panic."

Standing in front of all the officers and staff in the middle of the operations room, I made an announcement informing everyone of the Supreme Commander's latest orders, given to me by telephone, to stop all military actions and withdraw our units to their initial positions.

We need to plan the withdrawal and not to the initial positions. The units will hold the positions they are now in as follows: the villages Loia - Vaksintse - Slupchani Bunar - Orizare. The villages Opae, Lopate and Rzhanovtse are to fall under police control and clean up any remaining terrorists. After these positions are secured, security measures must be taken to defend and protect our units.

Unfortunately, some mistakes were made during the withdrawal, but they were quickly corrected. The line Vaksintse - Slupchanski Bunar - Orizare TT - 349 was secured. I ordered our units to take control of the area north of this line, i.e. in the direction of the villages Slupchane - Rugintse and Vaksince - Strazha. My officers were looking at me but did not question my motives. I had no idea what they were thinking, but in any case they felt bad because we had

stopped the operation. At the end I told them: “We are soldiers and we must obey our Supreme Commander’s orders - comments are not necessary!”

My views, opinions and whatever, in moments such as these were not important - if indeed there were or weren’t any casualties on the part of the other side, I did not know for sure, but in any case it was important that the operation was terminated, even though our aims had not been completed in full. Only part of the operations plan was achieved. But still I could not get out of my mind what had just happened and what I had experienced at the front line; the whining, the crying and the screaming; the very strange screams and voices, which were probably due to fear.

Why the Kumanovo operation was interrupted was revealed later. Namely, some foreign intelligence services had tried, before the operation had started, to frighten and intimidate us into not taking military action. When that method failed, they found another way to stop the operation. In all the actions that we took that day, as we later found out, there was not even a single civilian casualty.

Six hours after we started the Kumanovo operation, it was terminated at 14:00 hours and during those six hours our units, by road, penetrated the villages Slupchane, Otlia and Mateiche and managed to cut off the thoroughfare Slupchane - Vaksintse. Our units unfortunately did not manage to completely surround Vaksintse except from the north side.

In Karadak Region, after the Operation was terminated, we were left “hot and cold”. International humanitarian organizations intervened with aims at extracting the civilians and the sick and wounded. Each day the International Red Cross found some excuse to prevent us from conducting further actions and stopped us from entering the surrounding villages.

In all the villages, except for Loiane, there were about 2,500 to 3,000 people held hostage by the terrorists, held as human shields for their own protection. ARM could not continue with its military actions in these villages. It was not allowed for fear of massive “civilian casualties”.

I became concerned by the fact that, after May 25, 2001, a large number of terrorists from Preshevska Dolina would spill over into the Republic of Macedonia and the situation would become even more complex and we would still be powerless to act.

We received information that the terrorists were holding hostages, mostly women and children, in the abandoned mine shafts in the old Chrome mine, northeast of the village Vaksintse. We were also told that some civilians were held in various cellars in the village Vaksintse. A group of about 150 to 200 women and children were looking for a way to skip to our side. They were in the mine colony located between the villages Vaksintse and Loia.

We also received frightening information from Lipkovo: “There were about 5,000 to 6,000 civilians gathered around the mosque in Lipkovo who demanded to be taken to Kosovo, but not by us, by KFOR”. This meant that “the terrorists would be armed, dressed in civilian clothes and hiding among a crowd of civilians. And should our forces touch them, they would open fire on us and if we responded, we would inflict heavy casualties on the civilian population.”

Through the Red Cross, they called for a 3 to 4 day ceasefire to organize and start taking the civilian population through Skopje Tsrna Gora to Kosovo. KFOR was to take them by buses along the road: Mateiche - Skopje - General Jankovich to Pristina. They demanded that no one except for KFOR get near them. They said they had no confidence in our security forces.

This request, and the manner by which the civilians were to be extracted, was discussed at a state leadership level. It was proposed to allow the extraction and the transfer to Kosovo to be carried out by KFOR. Our security forces were to examine the buses and, with escorts, follow them to the General Jankovich border crossing. That proposal however was rejected by the terrorists. They instead asked to be transferred to Kosovo on foot through Skopje Tsrna Gora. All this however was only a tactic to stall for time so that they could stay in this region until May 25, 2001.

The humanitarian organizations (we had information that the humanitarian organization “El Hilal”, which was especially strong in Arachinovo, supplied the terrorists with all their needs and in that respect it acted in both Kosovo and Macedonia, cooperating with International Community forces on the ground.) were entering the surrounding villages and no one had the right to examine what they were bringing in. The only control they encountered was that from the police but only after they came out of the villages. With each entry into the villages they brought with them about 15 to 20 civilians, mostly women and children.

Our security forces had their hands “bound” and no serious action could be taken in the encircled villages. It was allowed to take “action only for legitimate purposes” - but there were no “legitimate purposes” outside of the villages. The terrorists were in the villages together with the civilians. For days we provoked them to show themselves but they refused to come out and fight, they simply did not come out of the villages.

The new tactic the terrorists employed was to “hold the civilians in the villages as hostages”. Their success, in terms of getting the time they needed, of course was bolstered by the help they were receiving from the humanitarian organizations, which worked hard in the entire region like some “massive disaster” or epidemic had hit the area and it lacked food, shelter, medicines and other necessities.

#### OPERATION “VAKTSINTSE”

In this situation we had no choice but to change the way we performed our actions, or change our tactical approach to our actions, in order, above all, to extract the population.

I decided we should try and clear the region village by village by extracting the civilian population through use of military action and pressure. Loiane was a village at the edge, near the Yugoslav border. We did not act inside that village but only in certain positions outside of it. During the first day of operations we evacuated about 3,500 residents and sent them to the village Miratovtsi in Yugoslavia and all that time we had no problems with the terrorists. Only about

a dozen old people remained in the village and the village itself came under our control.

The next village was Vaksintse. We had a plan of operation for Vaksintse but without the knowledge of the state leadership. My idea was to secretly and quickly, without the action of artillery and helicopters, penetrate the village with tanks and transporters and, through the mining colony, surround the village from the north side. It was already surrounded from the other three sides. Three extraction teams from the Sixth Squad acted simultaneously landing near the chrome mine where civilians were held hostage. Demonstrative attacks were to commence from the other routes in the distance but without entering into the villages.

I worked out a plan in parts and began to personally prepare the units that would carry out the attack. The tanks that were required to carry out the attack withdrew in the barracks to prepare and their commanders and service staff were sent to the terrain to prepare for their arrival and attack. When it was decided to perform the operation, because of the secrecy the tanks left the barracks in Kumanovo without artillery support and went directly inside the village Vaksintse and surrounded the northeast side. The plan was signed by Stoian Andov because President Boris Trajkovski was out of the country. Andov signed without any problems or issues and all I had to do was enter the date and time of the execution.

I told Giorgi Karakutovski that, even though this plan was approved, I had no idea if it was going to be realized and when, but in any case we needed to prepare the military units.

Vlado Buchkovski, Minister of Defense, had planned to come and visit the units in Kumanovo and so I used this occasion as a suitable moment to lead him to the village Vaksintse, to the front line where the units were deployed in defense of the terrain and where we would have to go on the attack when we decided to perform the operation. I also used the occasion to let him know how we were going to extract the civilians from the village Vaksintse. Minister Vlado Buchkovski approved of my idea and my intentions.

Every day from May 10, 2001 to May 25, 2001 we were under the control of some “international factor” or another, each attempting to persuade us not to use force, etc. However, I decided that we should start performing actions in the distance with conclusively legitimate aims to disrupt the “agreement” with the international factors which were permanently present and with us. NATO and KFOR helicopters often flew in the space above us without our knowledge or permission, and took pictures.

In the villages Slupchane, Otlia, Orizare and Vaksintse we found a concentration of terrorists from the Kosovo Protection Corps, or the so-called “spilled action” forces. They were ruthless in dealing with the people. In fact they kept the entire population as hostage. They engaged the men and younger residents to build them fortification facilities (ditches, trenches) in front of and inside the villages.

From the information we gathered from the civilians, we were able to figure out terrorist movements and schedules.

Based on what we knew, from our own research and based on other kinds of information that we had gathered about the terrorists, we decided to initiate actions in the distance, exclusively by open means - the only interruptions we had were requests from the humanitarian organizations. Those were the orders. We even established a team in Kumanovo to expedite the work of the humanitarian organizations.

We performed our actions during the night to mentally exhaust the terrorists.

On May 11, 2001 I received orders to cease all actions the entire day, supposedly for extracting civilians. If I did not halt the actions, diversions would be conducted throughout the entire country.

An ambassador from a NATO member country visiting President Boris Trajkovski said that he had reliable information that “if we continue with the attacks in Kumanovo, etc., the NLA will begin with ambushes, surprise attacks and diversions in the entire territory of the Republic Macedonia and therefore during the truce we must be very careful not to cause a surprise because the NLA was operating outside of their control and political influence.”

Several days later I realized that this was not the case. President Boris Trajkovski contacted me and ordered me to receive an individual named David Foley who would be arriving in a diplomatic vehicle with two other people. I was to escort David Foley through Slupchane Vir to the village Slupchane to reportedly negotiate the extraction of civilians. I ordered that Mr. D. Foley go with my people secretly, especially when entering the village Slupchane, and to keep an eye on the people with whom he met.

The same day I received the following report from the officers observing David Foley: "At the entrance to the village Slupchane, he was welcomed by three bearded men wearing KLA uniforms. He was welcomed, embraced and kissed by each individual before entering the village." In the evening I asked President Trajkovski: "Who is this David Foley, what is his function and for what purpose did he go to the village Slupchane?" The President said that Foley wanted to help us, to pull out the civilians. So then I said: "What civilians, he was getting kisses from the terrorists right in front of my officers, he is with them and he is not here to help us!" He then said: "Okay, okay General Pande not everything can be resolved by force."

Because of the things I knew I decided to hatch the operation in the village Vaksintse, which was already prepared. On May 25, 2001 the Yugoslav army entered Presevo - Bujanovats Region, so I decided to pick that day to commence the operation.

On May 25, 2001, at 06:00 hours I ordered preparations for an attack at 08:00 hours. The attack was to take place immediately in all directions - demonstratively overflowing in front of the villages Slupchane, Orizare and Otlia. Fresh forces were to pull out from the Kumanovo barracks and head for Tabanovtse and after from Tabanovtse they were to cut off the road to Vaksintse and then go through the mining colony and surround Vaksintse on the north side. In the meantime, the three teams from Sixth Squad were to rescue the hostages from the chrome mine.

I contacted General Risto Galevski and told him to prepare the police forces and to be in Kumanovo at 10:00 hours. "Will we make

it on time?" he asked me. "You will make it, it is very important that you be there!" I replied.

I ordered a 40 minute artillery attack in all directions except at Vaksintse. This gave the forces from the Kumanovo barracks and the tanks the necessary time needed to arrive at their destination and to mask their attack. Moreover, I ordered the commanders not to enter the villages, except Vaksintse. They were to perform actions with legitimate purposes outside of the villages. All the commanders were looking at me and did not know what to make of all this, except for Colonel Chedo Krstevski who was familiar with the operation "Vaksintse" and was preparing the units for field duty.



## EXECUTING OPERATION “VAKSINTSE”

On May 25, 2001, at 08:00 hours, we commenced the operation as planned - with an artillery barrage lasting 40 minutes around all the villages except for Vaksintse. The tanks and armoured transport vehicles briefly stopped in front of the village Slupchane and left. The village Orizare was surrounded and our units in that area took to the road, heading for the villages Slupchane - Otlia

At 09:30 hours I ordered the helicopters to engage. At 10:30 hours our units arrived at the north end of the village Vaksintse and the units from the village Alashevtse arrived north of the village Slupchane. Around 11:00 hours pressure was put on me to end the actions, but instead of ending them I threw in another three teams of “Wolves” from the Sixth Squad, to clean the chrome mine. We escalated the action on the northern slopes above the villages where the terrorists were trying to get away. They suffered particular losses at Kodra (TT 764), north of the village Vaksintse.

A citizen from the village Vaksintse contacted Colonel Stoian Petrovski by telephone. The citizen was a former associate of Stoian's. He “demanded that the fleeing civilians be guaranteed passage to Kumanovo and that they be taken there by the army”. I asked Stoian: “Do you trust this person?” “I trust him!” he replied. “Then keep him in close contact,” I said, “and we will consider his request. Also tell him that, for their protection, we will decide where exactly they will be exiting. Tell him this will take place at 16:00 hours and somewhere between the villages Tabanovtse and Rechitsa. If they go to Strazha or Loiane we cannot guarantee them safety.”

The action continued even more fiercely while Colonel Stoian Petreski stayed in constant contact with his former associate from the village Vaksintse.

In the meantime, that day, the head of the International Red Cross for the Republic of Macedonia, Mr. Francois, persistently, through Colonel Blagoi Markovski, demanded that I talk with him as soon as possible. I knew exactly why he wanted me so I sent him a message that I could not see him before 18:00 hours. As it turned out, Mr.

Francois wanted us to stop our actions for 20 days so that he could take the wounded and the civilians out. He always had this opportunity, but his results were always miniscule, covering only the sick and the elderly.

At 16:00 hours Colonel Stoian Petrovski came to me and said that the civilians were willing to flee the village, but there was a group of six terrorists who would shoot at them. I told the colonel to tell them to take a risk on their own; we would not act on them.

At 17:30 hours the residents of the village Vaksintse began to evacuate en masse and headed for the village Tabanovtsi, some headed for the village Rechitsa.

It was never made clear to me how they escaped from the six terrorists, but that same day our ARM and police units intercepted around 2,500 people passing through Loiane heading for Mitrovats and 150 went where they wished. We did not hinder anyone.

After I ordered a cease military, after 18:00 hours, I received Mr. Francois, head of the International Red Cross in the Republic of Macedonia. As always, our conversation went towards persuading me to stop the military actions so that he could extract the civilians. So, I said to him: "You sir, are taking civilians out every day for 20 days and all you have taken out is only 30 to 50 mainly sick and elderly civilians. Who are your contacts in those villages and why are you not taking the large part of civilians who are held hostage?"

Mr. Francois replied only to tell me that they had contacted him to tell him that they were all ready to leave because we had been very serious in our intentions and that they were emotionally exhausted and could no longer take our actions. I said to him: "I personally do not believe that, and I do not know how the President and Prime Minister of the Republic of Macedonia are going to accept your explanation."

On May 26, 2001, Iovo Andreevski sent US military attaché Colonel Robert Lynch to Kumanovo and asked me to receive him. As soon as I received him he immediately congratulated me on our Vaksintse May 25<sup>th</sup>, 2001 operation with no civilian casualties. Shortly after

that he asked to go to the village Vaksintse and take his associates with him. For some reason his request surprised me, so I asked: “Why would you want to go to Vaksintse?” He said: “I am interested in finding out the origin of the confiscated weapons.” So I said: “You don’t need to take risks and risk the lives of your associates, we will show you the weapons here in Kumanovo because those weapons were brought here and, if you want, you can take pictures and recordings of them.” In every operation this colonel was interested in finding out if we had stolen any of the American arms we seized. These were arms issued to the Kosovo Protection Corps. I did not allow them access to the village, justifying that it was “for security reasons” because the village was still not de-mined by our teams.

(In those days we received many written reports and other information. Written in one of those reports, among other things, was: “At 18:12 hours, Ali Ahmeti and G’zim Ostreni informed Commander Ilir that the “NLA”, from the moment it was created up until now, had excellent results in the political field because in managed “to ‘confuse’ the entire International Community with the signing of an agreement between PDP, DPA, the European Union, NATO and the Macedonian political parties, as the first step to the start of negotiations between the Macedonians and representatives of the NLA. Ali Ahmeti informed Ilir Meta that, in the course of today (May 29, 2001), together with the person from PKK, will be arriving in Kumanovo because they are expecting some politicians to go to Kosovo for talks...”

In the same report, among other things, it said: “At 21:36 hours, Commander Ilir Meta from Kumanovo informed Commander Ilir in Shar Planina that the NLA is in bad shape in Kumanovo and that Malich Nadrtsai was very nervous about having lost Commander Tigap, and Shefit Xhaferi continued to send defective arms to Kosovo.”)

## **OPERATION “RUGINTSE”**

Rugintse Region, with its village Rugintse, is located north of the village Slupchane and west of the village Vaksintse. That space was not controlled by ARM because located north of Rugintse are ARM’s defensive positions and the watchtower Strazha. About 30 to 50, mostly elderly people, live in several neighbourhoods in the village. We did not observe any terrorist movements there.

On May 17, 2001 we captured a terrorist in the region about 1 km south of Strazha. From what he told us, we discovered that he belonged to a group of terrorists stationed in the village Rugintse, in three houses behind the mosque.

We immediately planned an operation to break up the group of terrorists in that village. We then watched the village for a day and from our observations we confirmed that indeed there was a group of armed terrorists numbering 15 to 20, located in the three houses at the end of the village.

The plan called for a secret operation to take place in the early morning hours while the terrorist were sleeping. The task fell on the Sixth Squad. The only people that knew about this operation were Colonel Stoiche Zengovski and Major Zoran Blazhevski as well as General Risto Galevski who was expected to prepare criminal technicians from the police and de-mining specialists, who on May 21, 2001, at 06:00 hours, were to report to Petrovats Airport to be transferred to the designated area by helicopter.

We decided to execute the operation on May 21, 2001. Because of the secrecy of the operation, on May 20, 2001 we landed three teams from the Sixth Squad at the Strazha watchtower who, during the night of May 20/21, 2001, were expected to get close to the three houses in the village Rugintse and be ready to attack. The attack itself was to begin at 04:00 hours. The units in the village Alasevtse were ordered to close off all accesses from the villages Rugintse in the direction of Slupchane, especially the Slupchane River. This was to be done on the night of May 20/21, 2001.

The entire operation was kept secret and was done with the approval of President Trajkovski. The only other person that knew about it was Defense Minister Vlado Buchkovski.

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Military Secret - Strictly confidential  
Attack order - to destroy the terrorists

1. - Located in the second and third house behind the mosque in the village Rugintse (see attached schematic) is a group of 25 terrorists armed with AP “Kalashnikov” of Chinese origin and other light weapons.

About 25 civilians are located throughout the village.

The group is logistically supported by the local population.

The terrorist group has positioned strategic monitors who are tasked with watching in the direction of the villages: Strazha - Slupchane - Rugintse: Alashovtsi - Rugintse: Belanovtse - Slupchane, as well as watching our forces in these directions.

2. The 6<sup>th</sup> Detachment, with artillery support from Alashevtse Region and the units from the points Strazha and Belanovtse, are to execute training exercises and land the 4 teams in their designated places and then monitor the terrorists in the village Rugintse. The teams are then to attack and destroy the terrorists at the most opportune moment.

Combat support helicopters hub 105 mm, battery MF 120 mm and PLRF.

The means to act and perform the tasks will be decided by the 6<sup>th</sup> Detachment Commander.

Landing time 07:00 hours, May 19, 2001.

Deadline to break the terrorists May 20, 2001.

3. -While executing the designated tasks, civilian casualties must be avoided. Prisoners are to be treated according to the Geneva Convention.

4 - All other measures and activities are to be taken under the aforementioned regulations.

SP/TA - bornar 1805

ARM Chief of Staff of General Headquarters  
Lt General Iovan Andreevski, signature

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On May 20, 2001, Colonel Stoiche Zengovski submitted a report with a schematic diagram of the houses which the terrorists had entered in the village Rugintse in the evening. After that confirmation was given the operation was approved and scheduled to commence at 04:00 hours on May 21, 2001.

#### EXECUTING OPERATION "FIRE"

The action began at 04:30 hours with multiple 128 mm rocket launchers targeting the three houses in the village Rugintse and lasted until 05:00 hours. The assault began with the four teams from the 6<sup>th</sup> Detachment attacking. At the same time, other units started demonstrative attacks in front of the villages Slupchane, Orizare and Vaksintse, assisted by artillery attacks for legitimate purposes.

By 07:00 hours on May 21, 2001, the landing of the 20 police officers and crime technicians, to examine the terrain, was successfully completed.

The captives from the village Rugintse were taken to Kumanovo by helicopter.

The operation was performed at lightning fast speed both in time and space. It was implemented exactly and as accurately as planned. Two sport utility vehicles with terrorists were sent from the villages Slupchane - Rugintse as reinforcements. They were allegedly military police of the so called NLA - that's what was written on their jeeps. The two vehicles fell into an ambush and were stormed and smashed with the vehicles being completely destroyed. A number of the terrorists managed to escape into the forest towards the village Slupchane, leaving their vehicles behind without any resistance. The actions in that entire region lasted until to 14:00 hours. Our units covered the villages Slupchane, Orizare and Otlia

without entering them. Among the arsenal captured were five films showing the terrorists. That day we managed to push the terrorists to uncover themselves because for days they had disappeared - so at 15:00 hours a group of them appeared to be coming out of the village Vaksintse to provide assistance to those in the village Rugintse. We attacked this group at TT - 764.

A warehouse full of ammunition, fuel and other equipment was destroyed in the village Rugitse and captured were three M 48 automatic rifles and a lot of ammunition.

It was obvious that the terrorists knew we were coming but what was unclear to me is who tipped them off. Thirty minutes before our arrival at the village Rugintse the terrorists had left the three houses where they were staying overnight. We seized a large quantity of food and a lot of equipment from those houses. We also found food being prepared and cooked for May 21, 2001 and stoves burning, etc. From the people expected to be there, all we found was one armed terrorist. After investigating what had happened, we found out that the group had left an hour before the attack. It fled in the direction of the village Slupchane.

Despite taking all precautionary measures and secrecy with this operation, the terrorists had been informed anyway, an hour before our attack. Only a small circle of people were familiar with this operation, and even less people were familiar with its schedule.

#### WHAT HAPPENED AFTER MAY 25, 2001?

As expected, after May 25, 2001, after the "Liberation Army of Presevo, Medvedja and Bujanovac" was dissolved, part of its fighters spilled over into the Republic of Macedonia - most of them went to Karadak Region to the 114 Brigade which had about 175 fighters, equipped with 82 mm and 120 mm mortars, 2M arrow type anti-aircraft missiles, etc. They somehow had transferred this equipment through Skopje Tsrna Gora, probably with the help of the "humanitarian" organizations.

By holding the people hostage in all villages, except in Loiane and Vaksintse, with about 15 to 20 armed men and by using the

“humanitarian organizations” the terrorists managed to maintain themselves in the villages Orizare, Slupchane and Otlia. The village Lipkovo was their so-called “NLA” command and administration centre. The security forces did not act in the village so as not to endanger, among other things, the hospital in the village. At one point there were 12,000 refugees in Lipkovo gathered from all the other villages. According to information we received, in addition to the hospital being in danger, there was also a real danger that the Lipkovo Lake dam could be damaged. But still, in spite of all that, it was not a particular problem for conducting military action.

Mateiche was the last village where terrorists appeared and that was after May 25, 2001. There was a police station in the village Mateiche which was responsible for the whole area with a mixed population of Albanians, Serbians and Macedonians. Besides the usual number of regular policemen, the police station was reinforced with extra police. We had strong forces in Novo Selo, Umin Dol and Nikushtak to control the road from the village Arachinovo to Mateiche and Kumanovo.

After May 25, 2001, terrorists began to appear north of the village Mateiche, near the Mateiche monastery. The Vuksantse River was a suitable place for them to hide while traveling along the main road Otija - Mateiche and the road to Monastirska Voda.

At one point the Macedonian residents living in the village Mateiche were evicted. There was no logical reason for evicting these people since the village was quiet and problem free, our security forces never had to act in it, yet the residents left.

On several occasions, the commander of the police station in the village Mateiche wanted us to take action in the area of the village where Albanians lived because, according to him, the Albanians were allegedly hiding terrorists in their houses. Normally I would not accept such a request but I decided to further investigate the matter and take action if necessary. If there were terrorists then the commander had a strong enough force of his own to capture them or break them up. If he couldn't do that with his own forces then he should identify the houses they were staying in and we would make



a plan of action and arrest them - but naturally this was of course a police matter.

An Albanian person was killed by the police at a check point on the road Otlia - Mateiche. After that incident the police withdrew from the mostly Albanian populated northern end of Mateiche. ARM was not informed about this withdrawal. The withdrawal was justified as fear of retaliation and so the police retreated to the police station and then demanded that they be reinforced with tanks even though they had never been attacked.

The police attitude here “sowed fear” and managed to start a mass exodus of the non-Albanian population because they feared an “alleged ARM offensive on the village Mateiche.” After the non-Albanians started leaving, many robberies took place and people began to loot the properties of people they knew. I informed President Boris Trajkovski and the Internal Ministry of this.

After the Macedonian population was displaced, we increased our pressure by engaging ARM in the village Mateiche. Initially I rejected their requests because I was not convinced that there was need, because the village already had 100 police officers. But still the requests kept coming. So, ARM strengthened the police with one tank and one mechanized platoon.

Immediately after we added the ARM forces, without informing me, the police began to plan and execute actions to clean the part of the village where Albanians lived (the north part of the village Mateiche). They sent the one tank along the way from the south to the north of the village and to the mosque. About 30 to 40 metres behind the tank they filled bags with sand and made shelters, in other words they built a check point. Then, because supposedly there were terrorists in the mosque, they started to act. In this action, a police officer hit the tank with a weapon “zolia” - certainly not intentionally. The driver of the tank was wounded and the tank was set ablaze in front of the mosque. When we investigated the destruction of the tank and the wounding of the tank driver, we revealed the truth - at that time there were terrorists in that place. Why did someone want the village Mateiche to be covered by military actions (as opposed to police actions) was not clear to me?

But in several cases after that, unbeknownst to ARM - the police abandoned certain check points. They left the check point in Lipkovosko Lake (27 officers), leaving it to the Army units that were in position at Alashevtse (east of the dam).

After the formation of a new Government in the Republic of Macedonia, under a broader coalition, conditions for resolving the crisis completely changed. After Vlado Buchkovski was appointed Defense Minister, many things changed. After Minister Liuben Paunovski was removed - that function (Minister of Defense), for a while, was taken over by Prime Minister Georgievski, and essentially there was no Minister of Defense until Buchkovski was elected. So, in addition to President Boris Trajkovski and Prime Minister Liupcho Georgievski attending the top state leadership meetings, after the formation of the Broader Coalition Government, there were also Branko Tsrvenkovski, Vlado Buchkovski, Ilinka Mitreva, Liube Boskovski as representative of the Interior Ministry, Zoran Verushevski as Director of the Interior Ministry for counter-intelligence, General Risto Galevski, myself (Pande Petrovski), and other military and political personalities as they were required.

In other words, after the formation of the coalition government, a lot of things, in terms of the goals that the crisis in the Republic of Macedonia had generated for solving problems, became much clearer to me, primarily because of the fact that everything was done not to resolve the crisis quickly with military-political means when the Republic of Macedonia was fully capable of doing exactly that.

During my first meeting with Minister Vlado Buckovski and Branko Tsrvenkovski we talked about MANU's idea, before the "exchange of territories and division of the Republic of Macedonia's territory" became public. We talked about many things regarding the situation in the Republic of Macedonia, especially about the purpose for triggering the crises. In addition to that, Branko Tsrvenkovski (then leader of the SDSM party and a Member of Parliament) informed me about the proposed division of the Republic of Macedonia; the relocation of the population; who advocated that idea; and who wanted to implement it. Besides all that he said: "This idea will quickly become public knowledge". And so it was. He emphasized that the broader coalition was adopted primarily to prevent such an

idea advocated by individuals... At my insistence, Iovo Andreevski, as Chief of Staff of General Headquarters, was invited to be present and to also be informed by Branko Tsrvenkovski. After Iovo Andreevski joined us, Tsrvenkovski, once again, went over what he had told me, but with a much more dramatic tone. Iovo Andreevski was silent all the time, showing no outward expression. Branko Tsrvenkovski, in front of Andreevski, then mentioned the names of the individuals who were advocating the idea of dividing the Republic of Macedonia and who intended to implement it. Prime Minister Georgievski and President Boris Trajkovski were quickly informed of this conversation and so was the Cabinet of the Defense Minister.

I picked up many things from this: in terms of the government's ultimate goals; in terms of the sincerity to resolve the crisis by military means; in terms of establishing full control of the territory by military means, etc. After my conversation with Branko Tsrvenkovski, most government figures changed their attitude towards me in terms of their confidence in me as the leader of ARM.

It was very strange and illogical, when at the beginning of the crisis our leadership did not properly interpret the aims of the so-called NLA - but immediately called them terrorists - when the so-called NLA's goals were obvious. The West called these people "Ethnic Albanian armed groups" fighting for their national rights.

I repeatedly tried to define these goals for the state leadership, but it seems I was not understood. I personally thought then and I still think today that the military crisis was purposely staged, strictly controlled, externally supported and planned with the knowledge of the political structures that were then in power in the Republic of Macedonia. Later, during the political negotiations, with respect to the Framework Agreement, this was confirmed. The faction that had interest in this was the same faction that represented the so-called NLA's interests in the negotiations.

The whole scenario surrounding the military crisis, from the beginning, was well-known to some of the people in the ruling government. To them it was not important to find a way of resolving the crisis, to them it was much more important to find a way to

justify their political exploitations in front of the Macedonian people. But when we began to address the military crisis with serious military means, when there was “danger” that the “ethnic Albanian armed groups” would be broken up, in order to prevent this, some Western countries activated the finale with a political agreement. Among other activities to control the crisis, was the formation of the “wider coalition” whose aim was to reach a political resolution.

Even though Tetovo and Kumanovo Regions were fully under the control of the Republic of Macedonia’s security forces, and even though the terrorists in Kumanovo were completely smashed, the political factors still treated the so-called NLA like some kind of important military factor in order to keep the tension going. Namely, no measures had been taken, in terms of military means, by the so-called NLA to justify itself to the public that it was a legitimate force in the crisis worthy of political consideration. Something more serious had to be done, the so-called NLA had to invent some kind of operation where it “dominated” the security forces of the Republic of Macedonia in order to continue the crisis and so that it could be resolved by political means. By this time the extraction of civilians from Kumanovo Region was in the final stages and the terrorists were defeated. Terrorists had not appeared in Tetovo for months because conditions there were not viable due to the presence of ARM.

So, no time was wasted in inventing a means to force out the Macedonian people from the Shar Planina villages and that was done quickly. Then a media campaign was started. Accusation were made such as “how the Army does not support the police”; “how the police are insufficiently armed with armoured personnel carriers and artillery”; “how the police should take over command for conducting military actions”; “and that the Interior Ministry should form its own special units,”; etc.

Among others, in that period, without the knowledge of ARM and the Interior Ministry 30,000 “Kalashnikov” type rifles were imported from Bulgaria and stashed in the ARM warehouses in Kochani, and later distributed to the population, especially to people in Tetovo. This was the beginning of the turning of the crisis into

chaos in the Republic of Macedonia, with aims at sending it out of control.

## **ARACHINOVO - AN ATTEMPT TO RESOLVE THE CRISIS BY POLITICAL MEANS**

I was wounded in the village Mateiche on June 3, 2001, and until June 12, 2001 I was in the Military Hospital in Skopje getting treatment. Three days after being submitted, I received a call from President Boris Trajkovski who, among other things, asked me to think about Arachinovo. I informed him that I had no accurate information about what was going on in Arachinovo, other than what had been said on television and in the media and that most of that information was exaggerated or propaganda. According to media reports “there were about 4,000 terrorists in Arachinovo and they were preparing for an attack.” I gave the President a short reply assuring him that all that was propaganda and that there were no more than 1,000 to 1,500 terrorists in all of Macedonia and that a large part of those numbers were probably terrorists who had escaped from Karadak Region where they could no longer operate. I said: “From a military aspect, Arachinovo is not a threat because it is blocked.”

On June 12, 2001 I got out of the military hospital and went to ARM General Headquarters. After examining the situation I issued some tasks to start preparations for a possible ARM involvement in Arachinovo.

I could not figure out what would be the purpose for creating a crisis in Arachinovo. Arachinovo was close to Skopje and to Petrovats Airport, and NATO forces were stationed in Petrovats! Ever since May 2001, Arachinovo was half surrounded by ARM and police forces. From a military aspect it posed no threat and future actions seemed to be unnecessary. In March, April, May and June 2001, there were no offensive actions or operations on the part of the so-called NLA that would demonstrate strength or readiness. On the contrary, all this time we tried to provoke the terrorists to show themselves, to get them to start something, but all this time they were absent.

I figured it was some sort of bluff - to divert our attention away from Tetovo and Kumanovo Regions. There were threats of uprisings in Gostivar, Debar and even Kichevo but no terrorists emerged there,

except for a small group which appeared in the village Ribnitsa and which was quickly broken up. What's up now with Arachinovo and in Skopje where everyone knew we had strong security presence? There were indications that a terrorist group extracted from Kumanovo and some which came from Preshevo Dolina may still exist but all this did not fit into what was going on with the whole military system and with the situation in the Republic Macedonia.

In any case, the police completely blockaded Arachinovo where no one could enter or exit the village. Everything was under control in terms of in or out movements. And, regarding the number of terrorists present in Arachinovo, all that was misinformation coming out of the Macedonian media. The media seemed to compete over who would say more about what was going on, and that information was certainly coming from someone who had aims to raise the issue to the highest level. In other words, if an operation is not undertaken in Arachinovo then the Republic of Macedonia would sink. Basically Arachinovo was meant to manoeuvre the Macedonian political body away from military actions and towards political negotiations. In other words, stop all military actions and sit at a table to discuss this. And to point out that in other regions, such as Tetovo and Kumanovo, for example, the military option obviously did not succeed.

At our usual meetings I made sure I emphasized that Arachinovo was nothing special from a military point of view, and that we needed to finish our work in Kumanovo. But Prime Minister Georgievski, at the top level of the state leadership, had different ideas. His position was that: "We should not allow a free territory to be declared in front of Skopje." I insisted that Arachinovo was not a problem because it was blocked by police and military forces and that we had deployed ARM units in the zone Nikushtak, Umin Dol and Grushino, and police forces in the villages Moiantse, Orlantsi and Brniartsi. From a military point of view this meant that we controlled the entire wider environment around Arachinovo. In other words all direct entrances and exits were controlled by police without any special problems.

On June 14, 2001 I had a meeting with the Deputy of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the United States. Among other things, he

reiterated American views on the matter and stated that the US was very concerned about the situation in the Republic of Macedonia. He then said: "The Republic of Macedonia has absolute support for its territorial integrity." He then added: "We want this situation to be resolved politically and not by military means, to give political dialogue a chance like in Preshevska Dolina..." Later he spoke to me and said: "You need to use proportional force, and not destroy villages just to kill several insurgents!" He then continued: "This week, and for a period following, we will turn our attention to the Republic of Macedonia, we will close the Kosovo border with greater intensity and we will increase our patrol units from 11 to 19, supported by surveillance helicopters... etc." The deputy then said: "Our and NATO's opinion in terms of the overall situation in Macedonia and the way to overcome the crisis is changing."

I immediately understood why Arachinovo was going to be the turning point of the crisis in the Republic Macedonia.

After the wider Government coalition was formed, a coordinating body was appointed to deal with the crisis - something similar to what was done in Kosovo. After it was formed the Coordinating Body scheduled a meeting for June 15, 2001. Appointed as head of the Coordinating Body was Ilia Filipovski, Vice President of the Government. Included among the others appointed to this Body were Vlado Buckovski, Minister of Defense; Liube Boskovski, Interior Minister; Bedredin Ibraimi, Minister of Labour and Social Policy, Izet Memeti, Minister of Justice; Nikola Gruevski, Minister of Finance; Dr. Petar Miloshevski, Minister of Health; Ilinka Mitreva, Minister of Foreign Affairs and myself (Pande Petrovski) Chief of Staff of General Headquarters. If necessary, and depending on the issues discussed, Ilia Filipovski could call on other experts from other ministries.

The Coordinating Body met on June 15, 2001. The main purpose of the meeting was to consider the Arachinovo situation and come up with suggestions on how to solve the critical situation in this village. But the items raised during this meeting were; why were weapons shared with the residents in Tetovo - i.e. residents of villages with a Macedonian population; and why was the humanitarian convoy sent to Lipkovo Region... etc. However, in the established body of the



Government there were two ministers of Albanian ethnicity and there was political opportunity to clarify some of the activities of the so-called NLA. But every case and point brought up had a positive role, especially the reconstruction of the entire area where armed action had taken place. Later some of the VMRO ministers called the Coordinating Body a “debate club”.

After my return from the Military Hospital I had the opportunity to catch up on the situation in the Republic of Macedonia and then issued tasks to my colleagues to prepare a proposal for an operation in Arachinovo; i.e. how it was going to be performed and when was the earliest it could commence. I also asked to immediately get an estimate of the number of so-called NLA forces and their capabilities. I wanted to know the status of ARM and its availability for use in maintaining an armed struggle. I wanted NATO’s role to be evaluated in terms of future actions as well as the behaviour of the armed forces of our neighbouring countries if we were to take a final offensive to break the so-called NLA. In essence, my intention for preparing such an analysis was so that I would have relevant information before I proposed a final offensive in late June 2001 to completely break the “Albanian armed terrorist groups” in the Republic of Macedonia.

Written in a report, among other things, was: “The regulars of the so-called NLA consist of Macedonian Albanians and experienced fighters from Kosovo and Albania. It is estimated that over 150 are former OVPMB (Kosovo Protection Corps) members who joined the KLA after May 25, 2001. The NLA is making an effort to expand hotspot points because it is unable to hold a front from Tetovo to Kumanovo and it cannot do it expediently. The NLA is unable to bring synchronized action against ARM. Ali Ahmeti, political director of the so-called NLA, had trouble controlling the local commanders in early May 2001, so he appointed G’zim Ostreni as general commander of the so-called NLA to improve command and control of the organization.”

According to the same report: “The appointed so-called brigades in the chart were tasked with numerous small tasks, recruiting volunteers who needed to be trained, build shelters, to be equipped, etc.”

At that time the so-called NLA had no staff and no capability or logistics to keep fighting, let alone with greater intensity. All reserves in Kumanovo were exhausted and they had no opportunity to continue their actions. Their so-called 114<sup>th</sup> Brigade with about 250 fighters, reinforced with international professionals and mercenaries, began to gradually concentrate in Arachinovo. Their so-called “Ismet Iashari” 113<sup>th</sup> Brigade located in Karadak Region had no chance of surviving. It was broken up and functioned in the villages in small groups of 10 to 15 terrorists.

In terms of strength, the terrorist forces in Arachinovo and the surrounding region posed no threat of attack against Skopje, unlike some of the Macedonian authorities and ministers were professing.

On June 16, 2001 we received a lot of misinformation, placed there by “friendly services” and received by Goran Mitevski, Director of Counterintelligence of the Interior Ministry who then passed it on to the state leadership during our regular meeting. Among other things Mitevski, during the meeting, said: “In the coming days a brigade will transfer over from Albania and will attack the sentries at Strezimir and Radika. It will then start an uprising in the Debar - Gostivar Region.” No brigade materialized and no attack took place. The only thing that took place was the appearance of a small group of terrorists in the area around the village Ribnitsa (Korab). Our forces from 2 AK went on the offensive and chased it into Albania.

Before Arachinovo, the situation in Kumanovo - Karadak Region was relatively peaceful with the International Community putting pressure on us on a daily basis not to act, but to deliver humanitarian aid to the “population”. For days the 113 and 114 Brigade “fighters” did not appear outside, blending themselves into the village civilian population and holding it hostage.

Tetovo Region - Shar Planina was completely under control - without any movements.

The road Tetovo - Gostivar - Kichevo and Gostivar - Debar as well as the Torbesh Most area, were secured by the units of 2AK. At that time, ARM in its ranks had about 20,000 soldiers and officers

deployed in Struga - Debar - Gostivar - Tetovo - Skopje - Kumanovo. It had a respectable aviation, 8 Squadrons of 122 m/m artillery of the type "Grad 128", about 60 tanks with trained attendants and was experienced in combat, etc. And thus the emergence of terrorists in Arachinovo was not a factor. We had established a Defense Command to defend Skopje even before the terrorists emerged in that village. There, in our composition as of June 16, 2001, we had mobilized 3,300 soldiers each equipped with a personal weapon, artillery, a tank company and other resources. And, as such, no surprise attack was possible, especially an attack on Skopje. At that time all vital facilities around Skopje were secured.

Unfortunately at that moment I could not assess NATO's real intentions, declaratively however, its role and that of the international community was clear. I was sure of one thing and if the propaganda indicated an "attack against Petrovets Airport and other diversionary actions" then I was sure that that would not take place because NATO forces were located near the airport and those forces strictly controlled the terrorists (military and political) primarily for their own protection and because of "other" reasons.

Then, given all that, however, I concluded that: The so-called NLA in Macedonia was not a serious threat from a military point of view, for as long as it was not supported by any other state or by any of the international factors. But what I could not surmise was why was it necessary for the political factors in the Republic of Macedonia to engage themselves in this? But, regardless of my own conclusions, President Boris Trajkovski, on June 14, 2001, sent a letter to the NATO Secretary General and asked him for his help in resolving the crisis - about which I only found out on July 5, 2001.

Also, at about the same time, some of the Western countries came up with a thesis to explain why ARM was unable to break up the 'armed ethnic Albanian groups' blaming it on poor training and lack of equipment and sophisticated tools. This propaganda was intended to prevent us from making a final decision and exact a final offensive on the entire region. These "friendly" Western countries in the meantime knew exactly what ARM's capability was and the kind of equipment it had in its possession. They also knew the

capabilities of the so-called NLA and the means by which their hostilities were conducted. These “friends” of ours openly put political pressure on the Ukraine to stop supplying the Republic of Macedonia with military equipment.

Obviously, if all these things were perpetrated, why not then invent Arachinovo and “prove” that ARM could not possibly deal with the terrorists by military means. Therefore why not take the next step and cease all military actions. The political structures and media were inherently in favour of such a solution and, perhaps unwittingly, had an unrealistic view.

On June 17, 2001 a meeting of the top government officials took place, during which, among others, Zoran Verushevski, an otherwise experienced intelligence agent, relying on his sources, spoke. He said: “The terrorists are experiencing great anxiety. They lack confidence in their leadership because they lost territories they had held and a great number of good caliber weapons. They experienced many losses and nothing had been done to improve the situation...” He continued: “They were all ordered, in all regions, to concentrate in Arachinovo, and to mimic their presence in the other regions...” This, at least for me, confirmed that the so-called “Ethnic Albanian armed groups” were about to collapse in June and would have failed to make it to the table for a political agreement. The problem now was how to convince the Macedonian people who needed convincing that a ceasefire was necessary and that political talks needed to take place. An example was needed to show that the Macedonian army could not provide a solution to the crisis. Therefore Arachinovo was invented. The fact that President Trajkovski, who at the meeting with top officials, in front of everyone, said: “George Robertson has given us only two days to conduct the operation,” confirmed that ARM was being set up to fail. Why only two days? Going from house to house and properly taking and inspecting over 2000 houses in Arachinovo in two days was not possible. Arachinovo is an urban city. One cannot cover it in such a short time especially since it was declared “a free territory”. Even if we managed to do the inspection, who then would have administered this so-called “free territory” all isolated and surrounded by our forces from all sides?!

Before the Arachinovo operation I had several meetings, including some with General Pull, Commander of KFOR in Kosovo, with General Lange commander in the Republic of Macedonia, Colonel Conan Ken, a NATO representative and his team. All was done in accordance with President Trajkovski's plan for resolving the crisis. In all my talks with these NATO - KFOR representatives there was one common theme: "for us to stop our military actions and for the crisis to be solved by political means."

On June 18, 2001 we ran into some difficulties during the meeting of the Coordinating Body for dealing with the crisis. The question was: "Should the President of the Coordinating Body propose the decision for Arachinovo to President Boris Trajkovski?"

I decided to take the floor and make my views known. In short I emphasized that: "Arachinovo, from a military standpoint, represents nothing particular, but obviously politically it means very much to someone. If ordered by the Supreme Commander, ARM will perform the operation. I believe neither I nor this Body is authorized to make any kind of decision in the manner of which the Arachinovo problem is to be solved." (Minutes of the Coordinating Body meeting). Ilia Filipovski, president of the Coordinating Body, then stressed the complexity of the whole "Arachinovo problem" and what needed to be proposed to the President of the Republic Macedonia.

The Albanian representatives in this Body, who were also Ministers of the Republic of Macedonia (Minister of Labour and Social Affairs and the Minister of Justice), suggested that "a peaceful resolution to the crisis was needed with help from international organizations and a media campaign", etc. Some of the Ministers in the Macedonian bloc supported the idea and proposed that "the leaders of the Albanian parties convince the terrorists to quietly withdraw from Arachinovo." During further discussion at the same meeting it was suggested that the terrorists be extracted with help from the OSCE and from other international community organizations if, of course, the so-called NLA was willing to accept such help.

Then it occurred to me: “Why were such discussions taking place, even though no terrorists had appeared in Arachinovo. No one had ordered us to achieve these goals and yet here we were discussing them. There were those who were ordering that the terrorists be convinced to leave without a fight - to leave peacefully; which meant that they did not want a fight!” Why?

Whether we were going to have an operation or not, considering the whole situation and on account that the units were prepared for June 19, 2001, I directed my colleagues to arrange for our forces to be ready for June 21, 2001, i.e. to be ready to attack, to perform reconnaissance missions, to observe and record, etc.

The thinking process at the top state leadership level, regarding the approach to take towards Arachinovo, varied. Namely, the ministers and leader from SDSM wanted to organize cautionary actions while those from VMRO - DPMNE wanted a full scale combat operation. Many hours were spent analyzing the situation and how to go about extracting the terrorists from Arachinovo without any unnecessary casualties because there was really no reason for it and, at the same time, we needed to show that we were a serious state and capable of resolving such problems.

With everyone present at the meeting I said: “There are many residents who have not left Arachinovo. There are more than 2000 houses in the village where a good foothold can be established. We are either going to have a proper operation or not bother starting one!” I also emphasized that: “We do not have enough special units to fight inside the settlement but because we have a strong ability to fight from a distance, and depending on how the terrorists respond, we will act accordingly even against strong resistance and quicken our pace until they surrender. I am assuming that the terrorists in Arachinovo have some reserves for a long-term struggle. We will surround them, block them and our actions will strengthen hour by hour.”

“Arachinovo itself is suitable for this kind of operation. The village is located in clear space, requires no prior action to arrive there and thus there would not be many casualties, but we will let them know that we are serious,” I added.

At that point the President of the Republic of Macedonia spoke up and said that we have limited time to perform the operation. We are limited to two days. I did not understand why only two days, I said we will decide how many days it takes. We will fight until they all surrender. President Trajkovski's reply was: "That's how many days George Robertson gave us!" (George Robertson was NATO's General Secretary).

Despite that, the President of the Republic of Macedonia decided on a solution - I mean a real solution, at least it seemed real to me - he decided that we start the operation and include international factors for mediation. Unfortunately Interior Minister Liube Boskovski was absolutely against this approach...

The President of the Republic of Macedonia was well aware that there would be many casualties on both sides if we went from house to house - but that was not our aim. "Who were we going to free the houses from? From their own home owners who lived there?!"

Eventually we came to a compromise: we were to plan a combat operation and if a political solution was not found we were to adopt a combination: military - political solution. For me as a professional soldier it meant "hot and cold". This was our task and there was nothing more to discuss. Then, while going over the combat operation I realized that prior arrangements with NATO must have been made, where, after the second day, NATO would enter Arachinovo and extract the terrorists. And that was exactly what happened. If that was the agreement then no damages would take place! The international community after all that would pay and there would be no unnecessary deaths, for which no one needed to pay.

And how was the decision for the attack worded?

Decision:

In the coming days to prepare and perform an operation in order to: block, break and destroy the terrorists in a circular form: Nikushtanski Orman; village Orlantsi; village Buchintsi; village

Aivatovtsi - the farms Belimbegovo - village Strachintsi. The main forces are to engage in the direction of the villages: Mrshevci - Arachinovo, and the auxiliary forces are to engage at Nikushtanski Orman - Arachinovo. The special units set up to combat terrorism, in conjunction with the units of the First Army Corps, the Defense Command of the city of Skopje (KOG) and the units of the Interior Ministry, with support from the artillery, BB (Military Air Force) and the PVO (Anti War Defense); are to block and then approach in the destruction of the same and create conditions for cleaning the village, which should create opportunities for the functioning of a government. (St. Dov. No. 07 - 35/272 from June 21, 2001.)

In order to perform this task we need to engage:

- Special units to combat terrorism,
- 2 haub. battalion 122 m/m,
- 3 units PCF (More barreled rocket launchers) of 128 m/m,
- 1 battery MF 120 m/m,
- 1 tank regiment from KOG - Skopje
- Military police battalion and the investigative battalion with part of its units.

The units of the 12<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade are to secure Petrovats Airport and to close all the paths that lead from Pchinia to Petrovats.

The area north of Aracinovo, the villages Moiantse, Gofa - Brnartsi is to be secured by the police in conjunction with the 16<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade and with the forces of the First Infantry Brigade.

The road Arachinovo - Kumanovo is to be secured by units of the First Army Corps.

Five days before the operation, all security units are to form a wider ring, and the forces that are tasked with the attack are to be brought there during the night of June 21/22, 2001 as follows:

- On the road Singelik - Arachinovo north of the road the attack will be carried out by the Interior Ministry's special police and by the KOG tank platoon, south of the road the attack will be carried out by the Sixth Squad with a tank regiment; in the direction Bel Kamen - Arachinovo the attack will be carried out by the terrorism combat



units; From the south side TT - 241, through Glaveno Pole, the attack will be carried out by the First Tank Company without the First Platoon which was designated to interact with the Special Unit of the Interior Ministry.

## EXECUTING OPERATION “ARACHINOVO”

For many days Arachinovo was blockaded by the police from three directions and by ARM in a wider ring. The roads Skopje - Singelits - Arachinovo from the hotel “Belvi” to Arachinovo and Kumanovo to Arachinovo were completely closed. Only the people living in it could leave the village - civilians at their own desire. The hotel “Belvi” served as a remote command post but the real command post was in the village Choilia. The Interior Ministry, a few days before the operation, installed advanced monitoring and recording equipment on the fourth floor of the hotel so that the village and surrounding area could be monitored 24 hours a day. All defense points in Arachinovo and beyond were monitored and observed. Two days before the operation we realized that the terrorists, in terms of defense, grouped their main forces on the eastern side. They were expecting an attack from the Kumanovo direction. The village was prepared for a group system defense at its approaches. Internally along the streets the terrorists had prepared regular resistance spots with weapons and ammunition left there for quick access and to provide resistance. They had deployed several mine launchers in the villages Maintse and Orlantsi. The villages outside of Arachinovo were suitable for sheltering mine launchers. There were no more than 200 to 250 terrorists inside Arachinovo, but they were well organized to defend the village by engaging its residents to do the ancillary logistics work. In other words, Arachinovo was organized for group defense in a circular defense system - there were 8 to 10 terrorists in each group (grade), using the hard objects in the village to their advantage, along the entry road of the village - along the streets - and especially in the central part of the village. But given how their defenses were set up, the terrorists had a different aim than to just defend the village. Their aim was to hold out for more than three days. Their intentions were later confirmed. They wanted to create conditions for NATO to become directly involved in the operation.

On June 21, 2001, at 04:30 hours the attack started with artillery preparations following predetermined objectives and helicopter attacks following newly specified objectives. In less than an hour all the units from all directions assembled around Arachinovo. Thrown into the mix during the night was part of the Sixth Squad and the

special Interior Ministry police unit. They were positioned in the village along the channel in the direction of Singelits. They were joined by a tank platoon from the village Brniartsi TT - 370. The village was approached from the north side.

A main force attack from the Singelik and Brniartsi direction on Arachinovo was not expected. Initially there was no serious resistance in that direction and the Sixth Squad and the special Interior Ministry police unit entered the village up to the cemetery, and so terrorists immediately began to strengthen the defense near the new mosque.

The attack from the east side (from direction of Krivi Dol) was going very slowly because the terrorists had organized Bel Kamen well with a strong defensive point at about 1 km east of the first houses in Arachinovo. After strengthening our attack from the south side of Bel Kamen, our forces broke up the resistance point and the armed terrorists were trapped. Some escaped to Arachinovo and left their arms and equipment behind. Kota 354 was defeated in the afternoon. During the first day we managed to reach inside Arachinovo on the west and north side but not on the east and south side. There, our units were ordered to stop outside of the village. We did not want to enter the village with our tanks because it was risky and we would have had losses, and there was no need for that. We continued the battle during the night but from the distance. I did not want to pursue the attack and cause needless losses when the village was completely surrounded and every incident was properly handled from the distance. I said the same thing to Minister Liube Boskovski. There were terrorist snipers and we did not need unnecessary casualties. Every point that we discovered, where the terrorists were firing on us, we attacked with artillery fire and with the tanks, and then we sent the infantry in to finish it off. This method may have been slow, but it lowered the risk of our troops becoming casualties. There was no need to rush the offensive since the entire village was surrounded, and all actions were systematically watched and all attempts to get help from the outside were prevented. It was a matter of time before the terrorists were forced to surrender or retreat. Without being supplied, their reserves would have depleted in a few days. And when their ammunition ran out they would have two choices - withdraw or surrender.

During the first day we found two foreigners wounded near the village Arachinovo. Colonel Milisav Tashtanovski called me and said: “General, we captured two wounded people but they are not Albanians... they are Americans!” “What are they doing there?!” I asked. “Ask them, get their documents and then contact Colonel Robert Lynch and surrender them to him!” I thought they were there because they wanted to observe the operation from up close like some NATO officers did in Kumanovo.

In the evening, during our usual meeting with the state leadership, I proposed that we continue with our military actions from the distance and gradually eliminate all enemy points of fire with our artillery, destroy all resistance and then send the army and police in to perform a clean up. The actions were to unfold constantly - day and night, 24 hours a day. Someone suggested that we: “Involve NATO as an intermediary to draw the terrorists out!” The idea was accepted with ease along with the need to continue the offensive and intensify the attacks. They all also agreed to keep the casualties down to none if possible; there was really no need to have any victims. The second day we intensified the attack and continued to escalate the pressure. Our tanks took point TT 354 and entered Arachinovo from the east side. Our units on the west side had reached the new mosque and were slowly but surely increasingly tightening the ring, pushing the terrorists towards the central part of the village. All this was monitored and recorded at the hotel “Belvi” by our recording equipment, operated by the Republic of Macedonia’s Interior Ministry.

On June 24, 2001 I received a call from President Trajkovski who said: “Come to my office tomorrow at 09:00 hours!” The next day I was at the Presidents office and I noticed that he was nervous. He turned to me and said: “General, George Robertson has accepted the idea that NATO should draw out the terrorists from Arachinovo.” I said: “Well then we will continue with the offensive until conditions are created for an extraction.” He looked at me and said: “No, George Robertson told me that there are 30 of his people in Arachinovo!” I looked back at him but I could not understand exactly what he was trying to tell me, so I asked: “Who are these people and how did they get to Arachinovo?!” He looked down and

said: “I do not know... but he promised to give me a list of those people...” He then continued: “Listen to me,” he said, “listen to me well, at 13:00 hours Javier Solana will be arriving here, do whatever you can until then. At 13:00 hours you are to stop the offensive. Now go, go and continue with the attacks and I will call you.” I tried to tell him that we were almost done with the campaign and victory was within our grasp. I said: “We are already at the new mosque in Arachinovo and rapidly progressing on the east side, the only place they hold is the centre of the village and around the channel...” But it seems he heard nothing of what I said and again told me: “Go, I will call you and tell you when to stop!” Those were the President’s orders.

I returned, but not to the “Belvi” hotel command post. I went directly to the village Choilia to the command post where General Miroslav Stoianovski was stationed. General Metodi Stamboliski was also there acting as coordinator for all ARM units involved in the campaign. General Zoran Iovanovski, a police general, was also there coordinating police actions.

When I got there I immediately called everyone to the operations room, we went to a separate hall so that I could let the officers know of our latest order, received from the President of the Republic of Macedonia. I also wanted to re-plan our actions so that we could do whatever was needed before we received the order to cease all actions.

I went back to the “Belvi” hotel command post around 11:00 hours. By that time our actions inside the village had escalated and were becoming more intense. Almost 2/3 of the village was under our control. Shortly after that the Prime Minister, together with Minister Liube Boshkovski, arrived at the command post. I briefed them on the present situation on the ground which they could see for themselves. Fighting was raging in the village streets.

Everyone was in good spirits that day because we were all expecting to completely destroy the terrorists. A while later, Liube Boshkovski received a telephone call on his mobile telephone. At the time he was sitting beside Liubco Georgievski. The call made him very nervous so he got up and, with a high pitched tone of voice, shouted

back abusive words. Colonel Stoian Petrovski happened to be in the near vicinity so I gave him a look and signaled him to get out of the room and not listen to what Liube Boshkovski was saying. I looked at the Prime Minister but he did not react, he kept watching the battle taking place in Arachinovo. When Boshkovski was finished talking on the phone, he nervously said: "He wants the actions stopped right now!" I then immediately realized that he must have been talking to the President about what the President had told me at 09:00 hours, so I imagine he had not communicated this to Boshkovski until now. After he calmed down Boshkovski said to me: "Trajkovski told me to tell you to terminate all military actions and for me to terminate all police actions!" The Prime Minister did not say a word but got up and the two left for Skopje. After they left I went to the Choilia command post where, around 12:45 hours, I received a call from the President who told me: "General, I want you to terminate all action in Arachinovo at 13:00 hours. Now go back to 'Belvi' hotel and meet with the NATO officials!" I said: "I understand but I will need at least an hour to end the offensive; for the orders to trickle down. On top of that I have the aviation ready for a final blow." He then said: "No, no, under no circumstances are you to deploy the aviation. I want you to call me at 13:30 hours and tell me that you have ended all actions!" He then added: "Don't you try to employ the aircraft, no, this is not a game, and I explained to you this morning what is going on!" I then reassured him that I would do as he ordered.

After receiving the call from Trajkovski, Brigadier General Zvonko Stoianovski, commander of air defense, called me and informed me that: "The helicopter pilots were reporting seeing white sheets displayed on top of the houses in Arachinovo. What should we do?" he then asked. I gave him a short reply. I said: "Okay Zvonko, at 13:00 hours you are to terminate all actions. Those are the Supreme Commander's orders! Also, after all the helicopters have returned, call me, in the meantime you will be receiving a written order for this termination!"

Because General Metodi Stamboliski and General Miroslav Stoianovski were standing beside me while I was talking to the President, and because they were in command of the units on the ground, I immediately ordered them to cease all military actions and

take necessary measures to defend our current positions. In the end I told them: “I am going to a meeting now so please stay in contact in case of further developments. Please keep the units on alert and be ready to attack on short notice, only if so ordered. They are only allowed to open fire on the terrorists if attacked, for security purposes and to protect themselves!”

I arrived at “Belvi” hotel around 14:00 hours and noticed many journalists, TV crews, various diplomatic vehicles, etc., standing in front of the hotel. I entered the hotel through the restaurant hall and there I saw the entire diplomatic corps accredited to the Republic of Macedonia. Amongst them, from our side were Vlado Buchkovski, Liube Boshkovski, Nikola Dimitrov, Todor Pendarovski and many others.

Immediately after entering the hall I asked Vlado Buchkovski: “What is that going on?” He said to me: “You will soon find out, there will be a meeting; Javier Solana is due to arrive at 16:00 hours.” Then Air force commander Brigadier General Zvonko Stoianovski informed me that our radar had picked up six planes, fighter-bombers coming out of Italy, flying through Albania and heading towards the Republic of Macedonia. I told him to keep an eye on them, follow them and watch where they are going. In the meantime, prepare our helicopters to be moved to the village Lozovo to the reserve airport!”

I thought to myself: - it’s no joke; NATO is prepared to use force if we continue with our actions. The President of the Republic of Macedonia was certainly aware of this meeting this morning when I was at his office, but he did not say anything to me, I do not understand why. I asked Liube Boskovski what was going on. He said: “We will both soon find out brother, I don’t know anything. I have no idea what these NATO people are planning?!”

National Security Advisor to the President, Nikola Dimitrov, representing the President on this occasion, introduced me to a civilian. He said: “This is Mr. Peter Faith, envoy to the NATO Secretary-General; he will be leading the meeting today and present the plan for extracting the terrorists out of Arachinovo.” So I asked

him: “Does the President know about all this?” Dimitrov then said: “Yes, and I will inform him about everything that transpires.”

The meeting started around 14:30 hours. Without any introduction, Peter Faith indicated that he was going to come into contact with the terrorists and offer them passage out through his organization. In other words NATO was prepared to extract the terrorists out of Arachinovo and transfer them to Kosovo. Liube Boshkovski strongly objected to Peter Faith’s proposal and said that he would not allow the terrorists to be extracted without being punished. I interrupted Minister Boshkovski, took him to the side and said: “Wait, let him finish talking and then we will talk. The terrorists are surrounded and going nowhere.” After Boshkovski calmed down he went back to his place and the meeting continued.

We all, for one thing or another reacted, we did not want the terrorists to be taken to Kosovo. In the end it was agreed that: “The terrorists to be extracted by NATO with their own buses and taken to the village Nikushtak. We were to take our tanks out of Arachinovo and out of the road Arachinovo - Nikushtak.”

Basically NATO and OSCE had three variants of the extraction plan, which in fact were two plans:

“A” - to extract the terrorist with vehicles owned by civilian companies - from Tetovo,

“B” - to extract the terrorists with NATO/KFOR buses, or

“C” - to extract the terrorists in their own vehicles.

From the three variants available we accepted a combination of variants “A” and “B” - (i.e.: First round to be completed with 4 buses from Tetovo and the second round with 7 NATO buses, 5 combat hummers, 5 medical hummers and 2 trucks).

We certainly were not going to accept variant “C” - the terrorists extracting themselves in their own vehicles. The meeting lasted only briefly. I was surprised to see that 10 to 15 minutes after our meeting ended, NATO troops were rushed in, in front of the hotel with all the agreed upon vehicles ready to do the extraction. This,



for me at least, confirms that the plan was already in motion before we even had our meeting. All we did at the meeting was confirm it!”

The deal was that the terrorists be extracted while it was still day time. We insisted on that because we needed the light to video tape the whole extraction process from the hotel “Belvi”. NATO was aware of that too. So, even though the NATO delegation went into Arachinovo very quickly it did not come out with the terrorists as per our agreement; come out at 16:00 hours and exit Arachinovo in the direction of Kumanovo.

After the NATO contingent went inside Arachinovo and while being supported by its own combat vehicles and troops, it completely forgot about our agreement. I have no idea with whom Nikola Dimitrov was communicating, but he stood by me in the hotel “Belvi” hall and continued to inform me of what these NATO people wanted from us. First, he informed me that the terrorists allegedly did not want to be extracted on buses but wanted vehicles and tractors from the village Nikushtak. I told Nikola Dimitrov to tell Peter Faith that: “If the terrorists don’t want to be extracted from Arachinovo like we agreed then NATO must withdraw from Arachinovo and I will resume the offensive.” Peter Faith replied and said he needed to consult with Javier Solana and George Robertson first. About 10 minutes later Nikola Dimitrov came to my office with a smile on his face and said: “They told me to tell you that the terrorists have agreed to withdraw with NATO.” I said to Dimitrov: “I told you that we needed to do exactly as we agreed.” I was thinking of NATO when I said that. But still they made changes to the original plan. Finally the 4 buses delivered from Tetovo, 4 sports utility vehicles and a truck began to roll out of Arachinovo around 17:30 hours and headed for the village Nikushtak where they offloaded the first group of terrorists. But the seven NATO buses, the 5 military hummers, the 5 medical hummers and the 2 trucks were nowhere to be seen coming out of Arachinovo. In fact they waited until dark. They did not want to be seen. They did not want us to see who they were taking and where they were taking them. That was the reason why they did not want to leave during daylight. But as the night drew nearer we closed all the exits from Arachinovo towards Singelik, towards Nikushtak and to the “Belvi” hotel. NATO and its security vehicles remained blocked in Arachinovo.

We wanted to let them out the next day at dawn but they were unwilling to go. The NATO people were well aware that we had recording equipment in the hotel and that we could not record during the dark of night. Similarly that is why we took our own measures and held them in Arachinovo all this time, but I did not understand why they let the 4 civilian buses from Tetovo take that group of terrorists to the village Nikushtak at 17:30 hours.

At nightfall, while NATO units still remained in Arachinovo, I returned to General Headquarters. I received a call from Mr. Ketskovski, head of President Boris Trajkovski's security team, who said: "General, please tell me, suggest to me, where should we withdraw the President, he has been threatened with murder. A crowd of people, police, etc., has begun to gather in front of the Parliament Building." I thought about it and 5 to 6 minutes later I called the President and said: "Take your security team and leave now. Go to the 'Ilinden' Barracks. I will wait for you there!" I also advised him to do this secretly. I said: "Don't tell anyone where you're going!" He took my advice and the President took to the road alone with just his personal security team. In the meantime, I ordered Colonel Blazho Kopachev to secure the barracks with military police in addition to the regular guard. I put the "Wolves" in charge of providing direct security to the command building. After the President arrived we moved to the guard brigade commander's office where everything that was needed - telephone connections (PTT, Special links, etc.) was available, and there was also a bedroom located next to the office for the President to rest. We watched live on television what was happening in front of the Parliament Building.

During the first moments after we settled in the barracks, we talked about the current situation and what was happening in the Republic of Macedonia.

"Does the Prime Minister know where you are and who you are with?" I asked.

"Nobody knows, the situation is very serious, I should have notified the Prime Minister and the Minister of Defense," he replied.

He then said “General, today is my birthday, and look what is happening to our country!”

After that he contacted his wife Vilma and then gave me the telephone to reassure her that her husband was indeed in the barracks and not in the Parliament building and that this was a safe place.

A while later the Prime Minister called me and asked: “Do you know where the President is?”

I had to tell him the truth and when he found out he said: “Okay then, tell him that I will be coming there to join him!”

Before that I contacted Vlado Buckovski, Minister of Defense, and told him where I was going and when I would be able to see him. I also told him that it would be a good idea if he went to the “Ilinden” Barracks.

Gradually, one by one, almost all of the Republic of Macedonia’s top state leadership had gathered in the guard brigade commander’s office in the “Ilinden” barracks. Only Stoian Andov, Ilinka Mitreva, and Liube Boshkovski were not there.

I tried to establish contact with Liube Boshkovski but was unable. The Prime Minister also tried but without success, at least that’s what he told me. I established contact with General Risto Galevski and informed him that the Prime Minister had asked that if Risto made contact with Liube Boshkovski to tell Liube to immediately call the Prime Minister.

The situation in front of the Parliament Building was getting worse. We all were able to follow it through live television in the guard brigade commander’s office. Hour after hour the situation kept getting worse and worse; it could have easily gotten out of control.

At one moment the reservist police appeared with weapons and joined the citizens, and then a platoon of cadets from the Military Academy appeared. I got information that: The intention of the reservist police officers was to join the people at the Parliament

Building and then lead them on a march to Bit-Pazar. Many of those present here, given the current situation, were thinking about what could be done to change that situation, and were offering their suggestions. One thing was certain, if the crowd was allowed to reach Bit-Pazar, inevitably it would lead to general chaos and to casualties. The Prime Minister requested that we engage the army to close the bridges over the Vardar River. I immediately replied and said: “The army cannot be engaged because there is no constitutional authority for such a task, besides, the army is already engaged at the moment.” “Then I suggest,” said Prime Minister Georgievski, “that we order General Risto Galevski to immediately shut down the bridges over the Vardar with his police forces.” (I immediately became suspicious that all this may have already been prearranged?!) His proposal was accepted by everyone but still we could not get in touch with Minister Liube Boskovski of the Interior Ministry. By now everyone was aware of what was happening in front of the Parliament Building, given that the entire event was broadcast live on television.

Personally, I had other problems: Arachinovo was blocked, but in it there was still a composition of NATO forces along with the terrorists. Inside were seven buses and a number of other vehicles along with soldiers, mostly Americans. According to our sources, there were many seriously wounded terrorists inside the 5 medical hummers. The buses contained so-called fighters dressed in NATO uniforms, i.e. in American uniforms. But no matter what, I did not forget what the President told me the same day at 09:00 hours when I was in his office: “that in Arachinovo there were some of their own (NATO) people, and that George Robertson promised to give the President a list which would identify who those people were!”

Because all roads to Arachinovo were blocked by the police, by the people and by the ARM units, every attempt by the NATO contingent to extract the terrorists was challenged. NATO would not allow their vehicles to be checked by the police. In other words NATO did not want the police to know what they were transporting in any of their vehicles at any cost, even if they had to open fire on our security forces. If we were to come to such a situation, it would mean direct conflict between NATO and the security forces of the Republic of Macedonia. For this reason Colonel Robert Lynch - US

military attaché to the Republic of Macedonia, contacted me several times and demanded that we allow the NATO forces out of Arachinovo.

So as not to further complicate an already complicated situation, I asked Brigadier General Miroslav Stoianovski to contact Colonel Robert Lynch and extract the NATO forces that were blockaded in Arachinovo. With help from the “Wolves” 6<sup>th</sup> Unit we moved the NATO forces from Arachinovo towards the “Belvi” hotel, along the village dirt roads during the night of June 25/26, 2001. In the morning of June 26, 2001, the US ambassador and Colonel Robert Lynch contacted us and thanked us for ARM’s help with the extraction. On June 27 I received an operational report from KFOR with the following content:

“The KFOR brigade for securing the border from Kosovo into the Republic of Macedonia (MNG - East) reported that at 05:30 hours this morning it caught 27 people, men, at location EM 436 777 (Dolno Zlokukiani, Kosovo), four of them had wounds from fighting and were evacuated by air to a hospital in Camp ‘Bondsteel’ and the remaining 23 were taken to ‘Bondsteel’ Prison. There were no reports of weapons found.” So, what was the likelihood that they would produce the “list” which they promised to submit after the Arachinovo extraction?

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June 28/, 2001, 11:30 hours

NATO/KFOR CONFIDENTIAL

Operations and Intelligence  
Exchange

CONTROL NUMBER

YEAR: 2001

VL NO: 1608

1. ORIGINATOR: KFOR –

TIME SUBMITTED 1045, 28 Jun 01.

Time of response:

NCCC LOG NUMBER: 1608

2. SUBJECT: Apprehension of 27 men

3. EXCHANGED OPERATIONS or INTELLIGENCE:

MNB (E) reported that at 0530 this morning, they apprehended 27 military aged males at EM 436777. Four of them had combat related wounds and were air evacuated to CBS Hospital. The other 23 men are now being taken to Bondsteel Detention Camp. There were no reports of any weapons found.

4. DISSEMINATED TO: The MOD

5. REMARKS / ACTION TAKEN:

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The above was a photocopy of a KFOR report detailing the extraction of 27 people. It is assumed that these were the 30 people that the NATO Secretary General was interested in and who, in his conversation with Trajkovcki, he had promised to provide their names.

I hope that one day, in the interest of history, the Albanian side of Arachinovo will tell its side of the story and describe the hell it experienced in those days. However, of all the events, humiliations, pressures, etc., the "architect" of the crisis in Macedonia managed to quickly sign a ceasefire agreement and sit at the table and reach a political solution. I am convinced that Arachinovo was purposely enacted in order to interrupt our military actions so that the crisis would be solved differently. This was done at the cost of having ARM and the Republic of Macedonia's military humiliated, especially the courageous security forces who bravely defended the integrity of our state.

## **CONDITIONS AFTER THE MILITARY OPERATION IN ARACHINOVO**

“Arachinovo” was needed in order for the military crisis in the Republic of Macedonia to be resolved by political means. To this end, among other things, the Coordinating Body was formed by the government. I do not intend to write about the work and contribution of this Body to the resolution of the military crisis because there are transcripts available for each session along with the conclusions reached. The Coordinating Body was mandated to conduct assessments of the situation and analyze and propose practical solutions to the government and to the president. It was meant to function something similar to the one in Yugoslavia which was mandated to address the problems in Kosovo.

The Coordinating Body was put in place to facilitate the work of the President and the Government because those bodies were involved in other engagements. The Coordinating Body was totally meant to contribute to the resolution of all the problems. In addition to that, it was expected to actively engage the Albanian factor of the “wider coalition”, and not just the state leadership as it had functioned before Arachinovo.

The International factors gave great importance to the work of this Body, particularly in its involvement in resolving the crisis by political means.

After several sessions, since the formation of this Body, it was found that solving the more important questions about the military crisis was hard work. However, the Body made major contributions to the cleaning and rehabilitation of the areas where military action had taken place, particularly in Tetovo, Kumanovo and especially in Arachinovo. Some of the ministers, especially those from VMRO-DPMNE, were not regularly present at all the meetings. Some boycotted the Body calling it a “debate club”. But still, the Coordinating Body settled, above all, the technical and political problems in resolving the military crisis.

In addition to the Coordinating Body, a Crisis Committee was established which handled all the information coming in 24 hours a

day. The head of the Crisis Committee was also a member of the Coordination Body - a Crisis Management Centre was also formed and placed under the authority of the Ministry of Defense. Included in the membership of the Crisis Management Centre were personalities from almost all of the ministries belonging to the Coordinating Body.

In addition to all the accredited international institutions and representatives of NATO, OSCE, etc. that remained in the Republic of Macedonia after “Arachinovo”, was also Peter Faith, personal representative to the NATO Secretary General, whose role was to coordinate all activities and to directly mediate between the Republic of Macedonia’s security forces and the so-called NLA. It is important at this point to mention that Peter Faith also mediated activities in Kosovo, i.e. in the dissolution of the so-called Liberation Army of Presevo Dolina: Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedzhe. Peter Faith was in direct contact with the President of the Republic of Macedonia and acted quite arrogantly, even brazenly, which I found very strange. On one occasion, in front of the entire Macedonian state leadership, I asked him: “Tell me Mr. Faith, are you the commander of the so-called NLA, why do you assert yourself so strongly?!” This was when we were working towards a ceasefire. Peter Faith was in daily contact with the President, with all of us, with Ali Ahmeti and of course with the NATO Secretary General.

The initiative to end the military crisis by political means - with aims: “to end the crisis that disrupted the Republic of Macedonia’s peaceful democratic development and was a direct threat to regional stability” - led to the signing of an unconditional ceasefire agreement. Among other things, Peter Faith sent a letter to Ilia Filipovski, Vice President of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia. (The letter is included further down in this book.)

Personally I was not committed to accepting or rejecting any of the terms and conditions proposed by mediator Peter Faith. The first request for signing an agreement was made on July 7, 2001, in a letter entitled: “Permanent ceasefire; accepted by all sides!” I don’t recall who compiled the text in the letter but myself (Pande Petrovski) and General Risto Galevski were also asked to sign it



even though we were not members of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia.

We accepted our obligations - given that the Government had decided to fully respect the obligations of the Agreement, from both sides, as per Peter Faith's direction.

The Agreement, among other things, specified that a ceasefire meant that all weapons were to be taken away, including the placement of mines and other improvised explosive devices, as well as for the security forces to remain in their current position and not to use the ceasefire as an opportunity to change or improve their positions. Nevertheless, the Agreement did allow the use of proportional force, if necessary, but only for self-defense and defense of others or to take measures against an attack "in a soft limited extent, intensity and duration necessary for defense and nothing more".

Certainly, all these obligations were meant for both parties, where above all they were obligations made compulsory by NATO.

After signing the agreement, the terrorist groups, especially in Tetovo, started with provocations and attempts to expand their territory, especially in the villages where Macedonians only or mixed Albanians and Macedonians lived. They particularly targeted places where Interior Ministry police forces existed and provoked them in an attempt to get them to break the ceasefire.

The police force was in charge of guarding the road Tetovo - Poroi - Iazhints deployed from the village Leshok. In other villages the police were deployed as follows: 20 police officers in the village Teartse, 70 in the village Vratnitsa, 120 in the village Iazhintse, 25 in the village Iegunovtse, 100 in the village Patae, 50 in the village Zhelche, 70 police officers in police stations, reserves. There were also 5 police checkpoints with 15 police officers each, at the time of the signing of the Agreement (July 5, 2001).

Besides securing these regions, the Interior Ministry's police also provided services for all the main roads connecting Skopje - Tetovo - Gostivar - Mavrovo - Debar, i.e. all the areas that were not covered by military actions up until June 5, 2001.

According to ARM reports, most of the terrorists were located as follows:

The group of terrorists that was extracted by NATO from the village Arachinovo, as per our agreement, was stationed in the villages Nikushtak, Vishtutsa and Ropalts with the wounded stationed in the village Grushino. No military actions took place in May and June of 2001 in this part of the region. But no sooner had they arrived here than the terrorists began to organize defensive positions in front of the village Nikushtak. The local residents were not in agreement with that and began to violently protest. But the terrorists retaliated and on June 27, 2001 burned down 10 houses. After that they relocated themselves to the village Nikushtak, which lasted from 14:30 hours to 18:00 hours. To calm the situation down representatives from the International Community came and dressed 30 of the most hardened terrorists in KFOR uniforms and, along with 4 other heavy wounded terrorists, extracted them from that area (as reported by the Commander of OTG - 1).

On June 28, 2001, with help from the International Red Cross, all the lightly wounded terrorists were taken from Arachinovo to the village Grushino where they were then extracted without our knowledge from Grushino and taken somewhere unknown to us.

About the extraction of the wounded, Mr. Francois, head of the Red Cross in the Republic of Macedonia, explained that he had approval from the Coordinating Body dealing with the crisis and from the Government of the Republic of Macedonia's Minister of Labour and Social Policy. After the collision between the locals of Nikushtak and the terrorists, on June 29, 2001, the terrorists retreated to the north end of the village Nikushtak. However, none of the villages in Kumanovo, which had not experienced any action in the previous months, wanted the terrorists from Arachinovo in their village. So, in the end the terrorists were mostly distributed in the village Mateiche, Otlia, Lipkovo, Slupchane and Vaksintse.

Lipkovo and the entire surrounding region were under ARM control, especially the road Arachinovo - Nikushtak - Umin Dol - Kumanovo. All movements at this time were under the strict control

of ARM, and so were all the roads in the villages Mateiche - Otlia - Lipkovo - Slupchane - Vaksintse. The roads leading to the Kosovo border via Skopje Tsrna Gora were closed. And as such the terrorists in Karadak region were isolated in only several villages with no prospect of any action or improvement in their positions. Brigadier General Miroslav Stoianovski with his anti-terrorist combat units and the units of the First Army Corps, previously deployed there, took over the entire command for further actions.

In Tetovo Region where the units of the Second Corps were deployed: Popova Shapka, Shar Planina, Gostivar, Strazha, Debar, Struga and the overpass Strazha - Kichevo were under full ARM control and no so-called NLA provocation of any kind was tolerated.

The map shows that the Tetovo - Iazhintse road was secured by the police, from police stations and from reserve police stations and not by ARM.

ARM, before the signing of the ceasefire Agreement, in its composition had 18,468 members - the human factor, 54 tanks with trained attendants, 40 howitzers 122 m/m, 10 light rocket launchers 128 m/m with service staff, multiple rocket launcher conduits 128 mm, 4 armoured transport vehicles with 135 attendants, helicopters "MI - 24-8," "MI - 8-4"; "MI - 17".

According to available information, before the signing of the ceasefire Agreement, the so-called NLA at that time was half-beaten and without reserves or a regular supply of light arms. All it had was mostly light infantry weapons and poorly trained new recruits. The number of terrorists in all those so-called Brigades numbered about 50 to 100 fighters in 111 brigade, about 350 to 500 fighters in 112 brigade, about 300 to 400 fighters in 113 brigade and about 175 to 225 fighters in 114 brigade. The so-called special units consisted of about 40 to 50 fighters. The total number of terrorists was about 915 to 1775, deployed from Kumanovo to Skopje and from Tetovo to Debar. In charge of the General Headquarters of the so-called NLA, deployed in Prizren, was G'zim Ostreni and Ali Ahmeti "Abaz" as political director.

The Government of the Republic of Macedonia received a letter from Peter Faith. The letter was written in response to a request made by Boris Trajkovski, President of the Republic of Macedonia. Following is that letter in its entirety:

“In response to a letter received from President Boris Trajkovski on June 14, 2001, in which he sought help from NATO to disarm the ethnic Albanian armed groups, I have the honour to inform you that the ethnic Albanian armed groups have given their commitment to be disarmed, which represents one of the elements of NAC (North Atlantic Council) for NATO to provide assistance for this purpose in close coordination with your authorities. The authorities of the Republic of Macedonia will be informed of the detailed military plan for the collection of weapons compiled by the commander of Task Force ‘Harvest’ right after NAC decides to authorize the realignment of forces. As you know the prerequisites for this displacement are as follows:

- Permanent ceasefire respected by all parties;
- General political agreement between the main political parties;
- Agreement with the authorities of the Republic of Macedonia on the status of Task Force Harvest and conditions on which Task Force Harvest will carry out its mission;
- Plan prepared by NATO and accepted by the Government of the Republic of Macedonia that defines the modalities and the time and space for the decommissioning of weapons, including explicit consent of the ethnic Albanian armed groups for their willingness to completely surrender their arms.

The mission of Task Force Harvest will be tasked to conduct limited operations in the Republic of Macedonia in order to collect and remove weapons and ammunition from disarmed ethnic Albanian groups as part of the resolution of the crisis in the country. The Force will be deployed in a limited time period in which the operation of collecting arms will not exceed 30 days. The Force will consist of a multinational single size brigade.

As you know, NATO legal advisers and those from your side are currently working on a formal agreement that will define the status and personnel of Task Force Harvest, including an Agreement that

spells out your request. Task Force Harvest is authorized to use force for self-defense and for the protection and implementation of the mission, including the possibility of removing any party that would hinder the implementation of the mission as it is defined here.

Task Force Harvest will passively collect all weapons and ammunition surrendered by the ethnic Albanian armed groups and will coordinate its destruction. All collected ammunition and explosives will be destroyed in the country. All collected weapons will be removed and destroyed in a third party country, unless Task Force Harvest Command believes that it is not safe. Representatives of the Republic of Macedonia will be invited by Task Force Harvest Command to observe the operation.

First, those members of the armed groups who turn in their weapons and ammunition will not be detained, except in certain cases. This is a measure taken to protect the forces, for self-defense purposes and to efficiently implement the mission.

In performing its mission, Task Force Harvest will make arrangements to connect with your central and local authorities in order to facilitate the creation and necessary coordination to ensure full transparency in the execution of the operation. There will be no state security forces present during the weapon's collection operation in any of the areas designated as locations for those tasks. Representatives from the Republic of Macedonia, authorized by Task Force Harvest Command, will be invited to observe the operation.

You are invited to accept responsibility for the security and freedom of movement for NATO forces and International Community personnel involved in the disarmament process in the Republic of Macedonia and take all possible measures to minimize the risk to their safety out of the weapons collection locations and to temporarily relocate your security forces as determine by NATO so that the disarming process can be realized.

I think there are a number of other measures that your government must also take in order for this operation to succeed. First, as a measure of confidence building you are required to stop all military

air operations during the operation, with the exception of those made for regular logistics needs and casualty evacuation in an emergency that will be carried out in coordination with Task Force Harvest Command. Furthermore, you are required to pull all heavy weaponry and garrison forces away from the ethnic Albanian groups, during the collection of weapons, taking into account requirements for the protection of the Macedonian security forces.

Second, as provided in the Plan and Program, members of the ethnic Albanian armed groups should be given opportunities for reintegration into society, including adequate amnesty, in order to overcome the crisis.

Third, after the operation is completed, the state security forces, with the participation of ethnic Albanian police officers, will carry out normal peacetime law enforcement duties in all parts of the country without opposition or interference. During the implementation, security forces will strictly abide by international humanitarian standards and general principles of human rights and will accept monitoring by the OSCE and EUM. Your authorities must ensure that no irregular forces or armed civilian groups are activated in the crisis regions.

I would be grateful if I can get your written confirmation that the content of this letter constitutes the basis for implementing the operation.”

Sincerely,  
Peter Faith  
Personal Representative to the NATO Secretary General

All the recommendations in the letter were accepted, including giving the terrorists amnesty and reintegrating them into society by the Government of the Republic of Macedonia. And how did the other side respond? How did the so-called NLA and its Political Director Ali “Abaz” Ahmeti and NLA Chief of Staff G’zim Ostreni respond to this?

In a report, in early June 2001, among other things, it was said that: “At 18:12 hours, Ali Ahmeti and G’zim Ostreni sharply informed

Commander 'Iilir' (who at the time was in Shar Planina) that the so-called NLA, from the moment of its creation to now, had done its best at a political level, because it managed to confuse the entire international community with the signing of an agreement between the PDP, DPA, the European Union, NATO and the Macedonian political parties, as a first step in starting negotiations between the Macedonians and representatives of the so-called NLA..."

According to Ahmeti, Tahir N. and another person from the PKK were headed for Kumanovo the same day because some politicians were expected to go to Kosovo for talks"...

It is becoming more and more obvious that Arachinovo was invented to end the military activities in favour of pursuing a political solution. This was not just the choice of the so-called NLA; this solution was favoured by the international community, particularly by NATO. Even though the security forces in the Republic of Macedonia were in their highest degree of readiness, after the military crisis began, and even though the so-called NLA was no match for them and was in serious trouble in terms of maintaining an armed struggle, NATO and the international factors still preferred a political solution over a military victory for Macedonia. The so-called NLA, at the time, had no more than 750 to 1500 poorly armed terrorists, about which the West was well aware, and ARM had about 20,000 respectively well armed soldiers, military equipment and armament and the support, both military and political, of a few friendly countries. Still, circumstances were created so that an Agreement for an unconditional ceasefire (surrender for Macedonia) would be signed. This was the first step towards bringing a political end to the military crisis. Should we not have acted the way the "managers" of this "invented" military crisis intended us to act, then everything that was undertaken in the last four months on the part of the terrorists: the military actions, including the victims of the "ethnic Albanian armed groups" would be for nothing? Yes, the "managers" of this "invented" military crisis in the Republic of Macedonia did their best to make us take this direction and we did...

The unconditional ceasefire Agreement was signed by two generals from the Republic of Macedonia - the Chief of Staff of General Headquarters and the Commander of the police forces. The

Agreement was signed on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia, even though the two generals were not members of the government and were not involved in the discussions that led to drafting the Agreement. On the other side of the Agreement was Peter Faith - personal envoy to the NATO Secretary General, of course. With a written request from the President of the Republic of Macedonia, made before the Arachinovo operation, i.e. as it stands in the reply of the letter from Peter Faith addressed to the Government of the Republic of Macedonia: “Reply to a letter by President Trajkovski from June 14, 2001, which was asking for assistance from NATO for the disarming of the ethnic Albanian armed groups.”

I was not familiar with the content of the letter written by President Boris Trajkovski but I was quite clear with the answers provided by Peter Faith.

In all the conditions set forth for the disarmament of the “ethnic Albanian armed groups” the first was the ceasefire Agreement.

In that Agreement, deemed conditional, sent to Peter Faith and signed by me (Pande Petrovski) and by General Risto Galevski, written in the form of a letter, the following was said:

“Dear Mr. Peter Faith

It is an honour to inform you of the following:

We are prepared to end the crisis which undermines the peaceful democratic development of the Republic of Macedonia and which poses direct threat to the stability of this region. Believing that an unconditional ceasefire, for which the conditions are confirmed below, is a concrete step towards a broader objective to solving the crisis.

NATO’s intention to assist in disarming and disbanding the armed “ethnic Albanian groups” is welcome. The presence of the NATO mission for this purpose is welcome. Welcomed are also the preconditions for NATO’s deployment, and for providing assistance in the process of disarmament, in particular:



- That a general, unconditional and permanent ceasefire must be achieved, and
- That sufficient progress in dialogue between the various political parties must be achieved, as defined by NATO and by the EU.

Reaffirming its commitment to implement the plan for building confidence measures without delay, regarding which the Government of the Republic of Macedonia has decided the following:

1. Unconditional respect and adherence to the ceasefire; refrain from all military actions; refrain from use of force and illegal actions against the ethnic Albanian armed groups;
2. Recognize and adhere to the extended Geneva Conventions Protocol (Protocol II) of August 12, 1949, regarding the protection of victims of international conflict;
3. The ceasefire applies to all ARM security forces. The Government of the Republic of Macedonia will ensure that the provisions of this document also apply to all irregular forces and armed civilian groups;
4. The definition “armed forces” includes groups and individuals from all sides who accept the authority and command of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia, including regular forces, police forces, border police, army and police reserves, military police, intelligence services, Ministry of Interior local police and special anti-terrorism and police forces which maintain public order and peace;
5. Securing international observers;
6. Provisions of the ceasefire will go into effect starting on July 6, 2001 at 00:01 hours.

## 7. MODALITIES

- a) Ceasefire applies to all weapons, including the installation of mines or improvised devices.
- b) The Government of the Republic of Macedonia is taking all possible measures to ensure security and freedom of movement for all international community personnel.
- c) They will maintain the current position of their armed forces, except where arrangements are made to enable local disengagements or where government forces are instructed to return to the barracks. The ceasefire must not be exploited to improve their positions.

## 8. WARNING

- a) After the ceasefire goes into effect, law enforcement forces will perform their duties without bias and will fully act against all threats to the Republic of Macedonia without any ethnic, religious or racial prejudice.
- b) None of the above ceasefire provisions will be interpreted as loss of the inherent right to self-defense, meaning using proportional force necessary for self-defense from limited or continuous attack. Any use of force must be limited to the extent, intensity and duration necessary for self-defense and no more. Revenge is not self-defense and represents a violation of the ceasefire.”

Chief of Staff of General Headquarters  
Lieutenant General,  
Pande Petrovski s.r.  
General,  
Risto Galevski

The ceasefire Agreement was negotiated and signed on July 5, 2001, or 10 days after the termination of the Arachinovo operation and the extraction of the terrorists by NATO. In other words, the Agreement was compiled very quickly and efficiently...!

About 30 minutes before the signing, on July 5, 2001, myself (Pande Petrovski) and General Risto Galevski were invited to sign the agreement. I did not know who had compiled the letter (ceasefire

agreement) but from its content and the fact that everything that was asked for was accepted, I concluded that this was the work of Peter Faith, the same person who had submitted a letter to the Government of the Republic of Macedonia.

It was not quite clear to me why the letter (Agreement) had to be signed by me and General Risto Galevski on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia when, as I said earlier, we were not members of that government! It was explained to us that we commanded the armed forces and that we would provide our own written orders for the full implementation of the same. We were also told that Peter Faith would make sure the other side (terrorists) would sign a ceasefire document similar to this. However, I never saw such a document then or after that. I assume the Macedonian Government received this document signed by Ali Ahmeti or G'zim Ostreni.

Regardless of what I thought, I accepted my responsibility and signed the unconditional ceasefire document because of the overall situation in the Republic of Macedonia, which involved the International Community and especially NATO. The military crisis had to be dealt with as soon as possible, even by political means if necessary, before a civil war erupted or worse, Macedonia was divided.

The same day I gave an order to the field units to implement a ceasefire.

We entered a stage when we began to solve the military crisis through intermediaries and facilitators, of course under peaceful means.

At the outset of the crisis we publicly called our antagonists "terrorists" even though they called themselves "National Liberation Army" NLA. But, according to their way of fighting they used classical terrorist methods, especially in Kumanovo and even later. They held people hostage, they harassed and blackmailed people. They blew up public roads, set ambushes outside the military zones, etc. In other words, they acted exactly like terrorists!

At the outset the so-called NLA defined itself as an “organized rebel army” with aims at “getting more rights for the Albanian minority in Macedonia”. It is somewhat understandable for a group of people nowadays, as often happens, to want to gain “special” rights. But special “rights” are not gained through terrorist activities and by organizing an armed “rebel army”. The route taken here is not to achieve “special rights” but a military revolution which is designed to bring radical changes in the country. A military revolution does not happen on its own, it must be driven by political structures and intra-political structures that set goals in the state where this is taking place and above all, before the International Community. In our example, with respect to support of an “organized insurgent army”, in its very appearance, was supported by political structures that were in power, and later by the opposition (talks in Ohrid) from the Albanian block.

If at the beginning of the conflict the Government of the Republic of Macedonia publicly defined the goals of the “insurgent army” and did not call them terrorists, the course of the resolution would have taken a different connotation in the Republic of Macedonia and in the international community - especially in the Albanian bloc of parties which were directly involved in the Government and all other state structures. All this and what happened up to the ceasefire going into effect, leads me to the conclusion that “the military crisis in Macedonia was ‘agreed in advance’ by the political structures inside the Republic of Macedonia who were then in power and were strictly controlled by the International Community in order to achieve radical political changes”. (Making changes to the Constitution and everything that emerged from that). If we are to look at past events and documents we will discover that the International Community openly gave its support to “solving the crisis by peaceful means” even though the “military revolution or military crisis” brought to Macedonia was started from the outside, by a foreign country, through the introduction of legal military means (Kosovo Protection Corps). And all this time, right up to the signing of the ceasefire Agreement, the entire crisis was led from Prizren where the General headquarters and NLA leadership was stationed, which communicated directly with the internal political structures in the Republic of Macedonia. Some of these political personalities even attended NLA meetings in Prishtina and Prizren

even though they called the NLA a “diversionary terrorist group” or more commonly as terrorists. While our operation in Arachinovo was being terminated, Peter Faith openly said to me: “General, these are not terrorists, they are an ethnic rebel army, an armed organization that wants its rights in your country, they must be treated according to the Geneva Convention”. He not only said this to me, there were government ministers and other government officials in my presence who heard it, but none of them said anything.

After my re-entry into active service in ARM, the two different views for resolving the military crisis, as proposed by the top state and military officials, from the beginning were illogical to me. One side was all for the crisis to be resolved with the use of military means and by legal use of our security forces; while the other side argued that: “The crisis should be resolved by political means.” This was the same group which disagreed with the specified border between Yugoslavia and the Republic of Macedonia! I personally believe that the then ruling class knew the real purpose of the military crisis right from the start, but dared not tell the public. The DPA (political party of the Albanians in Macedonia), as a coalition partner in the government, held out and remained in power until the new elections. But, regardless of the two different ways in wanting to resolve the military crisis in the Republic of Macedonia, it was decided to use the security forces to begin operations but decided to break them off before the crisis had ended. And, as always, using the excuse not to accumulate “large civilian casualties” or “not to cause the Albanian people to rebel”, etc.

Basically, the idea was to start a military operation and see what happened. If military success was possible then the tools to control the military crisis would be employed because that’s how the “manager” of the crisis wanted it to go. The government was allowed to use the security forces but was not allowed to resolve the crisis by military means. Every time there was a chance for success the military operation was prematurely terminated. This was done to prove to the people that the military was incapable of resolving the crisis and a political solution was justified. But ultimately the crisis was resolved by a third means, a third option was selected; a “hot and cold” option, by military and political means.

The President's position was well known to the public, especially with his plan for resolving the crisis, i.e. the President always advocated the crisis to be resolved by political means and with the support of NATO, EU and OSCE, justifying his position for a peaceful resolution to the crisis. Prime Minister Georgievski, on the other hand, advocated for a full military resolution to the crisis and was even prepared to declare martial law in the Republic of Macedonia if necessary. But, every time we started a military operation the Prime Minister would show up at the command post and watch until the operation was terminated. Classic examples of this were the military operations in Kumanovo and Arachinovo. The Prime Minister publicly advocated for the crisis to be resolved by military means but every time the operation was interrupted he had no objections to it. He never objected or questioned why the operation was terminated.

During the time the unconditional ceasefire Agreement was signed, behind which the Macedonian Government stood, ARM and all the Macedonian security forces were in excellent shape and at their highest degree of combat readiness. And, had we continued with our operations, we would have had total victory. Unfortunately, the opposite took place, our actions were terminated and conditions were set as stated in the letter by Peter Faith, such that the crisis was solved with direct NATO, EU and OSCE participation. One would have to wonder why?

## EVENTS AFTER THE CEASEFIRE

What happened in the Republic of Macedonia after July 6, 2001, after it entered into enforcing the unconditional ceasefire - through the personal envoy to the NATO Secretary General?

As of July 5, 2001, ARM stopped all advances and remained in the current positions it occupied. We received information that a terrorist group was preparing the ground in the area of Suva Gora (villages Grgurnitsa - Sedlarevo) for a long stay because it had no opportunities to expand in Tetovo due to the strong army and police presence there. The so-called NLA's attempt to take Popova Shapka and establish its General Headquarters there failed twice because it was defeated both times. Police forces were deployed in the village Rasche and the entire region was completely under their control. But given that we had a lot of ground to cover, especially the sources of water in Rasche and the wider region, we decided to strengthen the combat units that defended the city Skopje (KOG) by adding the 8<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade from Veles and deploying it in the village Rasche and the wider area. With the deployment of the entire 8<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade, all major facilities around Skopje fell under the control of KOG - Skopje. And thus the wider region fell under the distant control of ARM (Air Defense and Artillery); even in the Iasen hunting region we had a position with a battery of 122 m/m to support the units in that space and reduce the opportunities of the terrorists to expand in Suva Planina. An attempt by the terrorists to occupy the intersection of the road leading from the village Merovo to Sedlarevo was immediately repelled.

On July 3, 2001 a KFOR helicopter (UH - 60) was flying from the village Drachevo towards Vodno in the region TT - 416, a trigonometric point above the settlement Pintia (EM 390 442), near Skopje, activated its missile defense system (IC decoy) and then fired their bursts of machine gun fire.

In response to our inquiries, we were told that it was an act of the terrorists, which was not true because there were no terrorists acting in that region. Of course this was a direct action by NATO forces, or by KFOR forces, before the signing the ceasefire Agreement, although KFOR had no mandate for such actions.

The ceasefire Agreement was completely disregarded by the other side before the Ohrid Framework Agreement was signed. According to daily reports compiled by our commanders on the ground, 139 direct attacks were carried out on positions occupied by the Macedonian security forces. In Tetovo 117 attacks were carried out, 12 in Kumanovo and 10 in the Skopje crisis area. At the same time Republic of Macedonia security forces were hit 74 times; 60 times in Tetovo, 7 in Kumanovo and 7 in Skopje Region. In July 2001, 5 security forces personnel were killed, 25 wounded and 81 civilians were kidnapped (79 in Tetovo and 2 in Kumanovo). Only 61 of the kidnapped were freed during the same month.

From the above figures it was evident that the terrorists had expanded significantly in some parts of Tetovo Region. Such an expansion was not possible in the areas where ARM units were deployed; such as the town and villages north of Tetovo. That is why the villages with Macedonian populations were selected - where the police were deployed.

Why did the Macedonian people leave the Shar Planina villages?

The very idea of Macedonian residents leaving the Macedonian or mixed villages where both Macedonians and Albanians were living was totally wrong. The people being told to move away, was a deliberate act on the part of individuals who were then part of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia.

The thesis or idea was that “we Macedonians and Albanians cannot live together because we Macedonians have always had problems with the Albanian factor, and because of that we need to cleanse Tetovo Region of the Macedonians and Kumanovo Region of the Albanians”. But this thesis was unrealistic and false because Macedonians and Albanians have lived together for a long time without any problems such as these.

These tensions, in Tetovo in July 2001, unfortunately came into being after the ceasefire Agreement was brokered and some individuals decided to employ dire methods to evict Macedonians from their homes. After the formation of the wider government



coalition in the Republic of Macedonia, there was gradual doubt created about ARM taking serious military action against the aggressors. There were rumours that the “ARM Chief of Staff of General Headquarters was heavily influenced by Vlado Buchkovski and Branko Tsrvenkovski, the leaders of the SDSM party!” These rumours and doubts created a rift between the forces belonging to the Ministry of the Interior and those belonging to the Ministry of Defense. This doubt began to filter down to management and command levels and interfered in the ability to carry out joint military actions against the terrorists. Initially these doubts did not affect the execution of military operations.

The first signs of doubt appeared during the operation in the village Vaksintse on May 25, 2001, in Kumanovo. After ARM’s successful action in Vaksintse, the “Tigers”, a Special Police Forces unit belonging to the Ministry of the Interior, commanded directly by Liube Boshkovski, Minister of the Interior, disobeyed orders. After it arrived at the entrance of the village Vaksintse, it turned around and went back to Skopje without completing its task. After that, the Interior Ministry took measures to make certain changes in the unit’s command staff, which was within its rights. But while providing information to the public it placed some untruths about the change it made. There was speculation that the unit “was internally divided along party lines”. There was something not right about that, especially the political manipulation of the security forces, when a war was raging on and they were carrying out military operations on a daily basis. It is my belief that all this was happening because of the political leadership’s attitude, at party level and in the wider coalition, regarding which method to take (political on one side and military on the other) in order to resolve the military crisis. These kinds of attitudes caused repeated police station shutdowns and entire police units being sent home. These events were taking place without the knowledge of the Ministry of Defense, which proved to be disastrous for the ARM security forces in the crisis regions - resulting in civilian casualties and civilian evictions.

The different views regarding the handling of the military crisis caused major tension in the Coordinating Body. Some ministers stopped attending the meetings. The Minister of the Interior called

the Coordinating Body a “debate club”. Right from the start the Coordinating Body had difficulties coming to an agreement, even with some of the important issues, on how to resolve the crisis. This disunity was openly expressed by the constant squabbling between the ministers of VMRO-DPMNE and those of SDSM. Later, after the ceasefire took effect, the Coordinating Body’s primary functions were to solve technical issues, mainly about rehabilitating the crisis regions.

The different views expressed on how to resolve the crisis put a lot of pressure on me personally because I too was being pulled apart, in three different directions, by two Macedonian parties, SDSM and VMRO-DPMNE and by NATO, especially by NATO.

On June 28, 2001, a short while before the ceasefire Agreement was signed, we had a long meeting at the request of the NATO Ambassador to the Republic of Macedonia and at the request of the Commander of NATO in the Republic of Macedonia. The topic of conversation, certainly, was the situation in the Republic of Macedonia.

During our meeting, among other things, the NATO ambassador noted that NATO in Macedonia was very disappointed with the opinions expressed by the public and stressed that: “We removed the terrorists from Arachinovo because we are on the Republic of Macedonia’s side and now we intend to disarm them and persuade them to stop shooting... this is why we ask you to use proportionate force against them... it is very important. I assure you that we are now having talks to persuade them to stop using arms and start using discussion and dialogue. NATO is ready to help, even with weapons, we will even bring in observers, if only to find a way to hinder further actions, etc.”

Also attending our meeting was General Lange, NATO Commander in the Republic of Macedonia, who expressed his opinion. He said: “The public is misinformed about NATO’s role; it is misinformed by the highest officials in the Government of the Republic of Macedonia. We want to disarm the ethnic Albanian rebels and make efforts for a peaceful resolution to the crisis. The rebels have no other choice and that is why their last resort is to disarm and

surrender the arms - they claim that they will do that without changing the status of the Republic of Macedonia.”

At that time, June 28, 2001, I was still not informed that the President had sent a written request to the NATO Secretary General to involve NATO in assisting with the resolution of the crisis. I learned about that later, after July 5, 2001, when Peter Faith sent a letter to the Government of the Republic of Macedonia in response to the President’s request. Not knowing about this, my reply to this gentlemen was: “Dear God, I am only the executor who works for the defense and interests of the Republic of Macedonia. Only the President and the Government of the Republic of Macedonia can decide on the matters you are discussing with me. What I ask from you is not to arm the terrorists, and for the KFOR troops not to allow them passage from Kosovo into our territory. I have information that the Turkish battalion belonging to the “South” Brigade, entrusted with securing the border at Shar Planina and Restilitza, is allowing the terrorists to pass through over Lake Karanikoli.” As always, “they” (the NATO personnel) pretended to be surprised by what I said and assured me that they would investigate my “allegations”. Further on in our discussions I stressed: “Regarding your request for ARM to use ‘appropriate’ force against the Albanian rebels, we will use all means which will bring us success in breaking the terrorists, without endangering the civilian population and by minimizing casualties. I welcome your assistance for a peaceful resolution to the crisis and to disarm the terrorists if this indeed is your true purpose, as you say.”

After the ceasefire Agreement was signed, I had several meetings with foreign military and diplomatic representatives accredited to the Republic of Macedonia from almost all the countries involved. But one meeting, most memorable to me, was that with Mr. Perdue and with Colonel R. Lynch, US military attaché. It was styled to provide directions on how ARM should behave. At one point Perdue said: “Any violations taking place, while the ceasefire is in effect, in any of the spaces, will be on you...” He then said: “You can uphold this ceasefire or let it fail. This is a big responsibility for you personally and for your country, that is why we are all looking at you!” Without wasting any time I promptly replied to Mr. Perdue. I said: “I am not a factor here, not by the Constitution or by any of the

Laws of this country and nor do I make the decisions for what ARM does and does not do, my role here is to carry out the orders issued to me by my Supreme Commander, the President of the Republic of Macedonia and by the Macedonian Government!” Perdue looked at me and said: “We already know that, but we want to see what you think and what you are prepared to do to bring a peaceful resolution to the crisis. We trust you...” concluded Perdue.

During the same meeting I expressed doubts that the other side would respect the ceasefire Agreement. I said: “You can be sure that ARM, as an institution, will respect the signed document regarding the unconditional ceasefire. And, as it had done until now, it will continue to abide by the decisions of the Supreme Commander.” That’s when Perdue expressed his doubt. He said he was not sure that the other institutions would respect the ceasefire and a peaceful resolution, referring to the Interior Ministry. And then he said: “But that’s why we are here... to help.”

In the conditions created for a ceasefire, I personally did not expect that aggressions would immediate stop but I was sure of one thing, that the so-called NLA had neither the capacity nor the ability to take on something more serious, because militarily it was in a difficult situation, especially in Kumanovo and Tetovo. Actually, the so-called NLA at that point was in a state of deconstruction.

Before signing the ceasefire Agreement and after Arachinovo, the so-called NLA, for days, had not made any appearances anywhere in those regions. This was a problem for ARM because it had difficulty locating the terrorists and could not figure out why they were hiding, especially since we had orders, for exclusively “legitimate” purposes, to track them and their actions. I then thought of engaging our authorities to monitor the areas in Macedonia where previously no military action had taken place, for the slight chance that they might appear there, in places like Gostivar, Debar, etc. But still we could not find them.

All previous statements made, directions given, precautions taken, regarding the solving of the military crisis, above all with direct involvement of NATO and other international institutions, was not going as it had been planned because “someone” in the internal

political structures wanted the crisis to be resolved in a different way, i.e. to create chaos in the Republic of Macedonia, a repeat of what took place in Bosnia. But since there were international forces inside Macedonia, especially NATO forces, it was made difficult for that “someone” to start something.

In terms of the Macedonians displaced from Tetovo and who gave the order and for what aims, there were several versions of that story circulating in public. My knowledge about that was based on certain facts that were circulating in that region.

Up to July 5, 2001, that is until the signing of the ceasefire Agreement, the road Tetovo - Iazhintse was guarded by the police forces of the Interior Ministry, except for the Iazhintse Watchtower which was secured by ARM. The road was free for movement and the border at Iazhintse was operational. The whole area had regular police stations, reserve police stations and police stations with very strong forces, manned by about 450 active police reservists.

In the beginning, I personally had no official information regarding the displacement of the Macedonian population in that region “where the terrorists had regrouped and were terrorizing the Macedonian people.”

I contacted Peter Faith and informed him that terrorists had taken over the road Tetovo - Iazhintse and if they didn't release it, as per our ceasefire Agreement, we would be taking military action.

Faith asked me not to take military action, but to give him 6 hours to go to Prizren and consult with Ali Ahmeti. I also informed the President about all this and he accepted Faith's request to give him the 6 hours. On top of our conversation I also wrote an official warning letter.

The letter said:

“With this letter, we once again confirm that the Macedonian security forces are instructed to strictly comply with the provisions of the ceasefire Agreement signed on July 6, 2001.”

Later they received instructions to cooperate with the arrangement for demilitarizing the road and villages along the road Tetovo - Iazhintse, not to enter those villages and to refrain from entering the demilitarized zones, unless otherwise instructed.

“In regards to the Tetovo - Iazhintse road, the Macedonian security forces will abide by these arrangements as discussed with the President of the Republic of Macedonia.”

Chief of Staff of General Headquarters  
Signature: Pande Petrovski

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MINISTRY OF DEFENCE  
ARMY GENERAL HEADQUARTERS  
No. 30-674/782  
July 26, 2001  
SKOPJE

SUBJECT: Response to the information from NSSS number 2423 of July 26, 2001

To: Colonel Finney Olsen

Today, during the day, we received information on the current situation on the ground and disturbances caused by the terrorists. Thank you for the sincerity on your side.

I ask that you please personally convey my thoughts and concerns to Mr. Peter Faith as follows:

I am losing my patience, trust and expectations with the breach caused by the terrorists and with the agreement reached between myself and Mr. Peter Faith on July 25, 2001.

I feel the need to inform Mr. Peter Faith that if the conditions are not fully complied with as agreed upon, by 16:00 hours on July 26, 2001, I will be forced to act and restore order by use of the Army of the Republic of Macedonia.

Sincerely,

CHIEF OF STAFF OF GENERAL HEADQUARTERS  
General  
Pande Petrovski

The above is a copy of the letter sent from the Chief of Staff of General Headquarters of the Republic of Macedonia to Peter Faith.

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Six hours later Peter Faith sent me a reply from Ali Ahmeti with the following content:

“On July 26, 2001, I ordered the NLA units to:

- Fully withdraw from the Tetovo - Iazhintse road from Tetovo to the Odra, to stop all activities on the road and to remove all checkpoints and roadblocks;
- To withdraw all fighters from the villages to a minimum of 500 metres outside of these villages because of their full demilitarization. Every community has the right to designate a person to act as a liaison with the OSCE;
- To refrain from any kind of provocative action that may contradict the ceasefire Agreement from July 6, 2001.
- To allow free and unimpeded return of displaced persons in the above mentioned areas;
- To fully observe all conditions as stated in the July 6, 2001 Agreement;
- The terms for the above mentioned points, regarding respect for the ceasefire, are to be observed by the government in accordance with the standards set by the International monitors;

- Of course Army vehicles may use the road to supply the Iazhintse Watchtower without being stopped but with prior notification.”

Signature: Ali Ahmeti

The document was submitted to us by Colonel Finney Olsen, assistant to Peter Faith. The same day I received the letter from Ali Ahmeti there was another provocation by the so-called NLA. That's when I decided to write Faith another letter dated July 26, 2001. The content of that letter is registered under no. 2423, July 26, 2001.

“Today in the course of the day I received information regarding conditions on the ground and disturbances caused by the terrorists. Thank you for the sincerity on your side. I ask that you please personally convey my thoughts and concerns to Mr. Peter Faith as follows:

I am losing my patience, trust and expectations with the breach caused by the terrorists and with the agreement reached between myself and Mr. Peter Faith on July 25, 2001. I feel the need to inform Mr. Peter Faith that if the conditions are not fully complied with as agreed upon, by 16:00 hours on July 26, 2001, I will be forced to act and restore order by use of the Army of the Republic of Macedonia.

Sincerely,

CHIEF OF STAFF OF GENERAL HEADQUARTERS  
General  
Pande Petrovski

After submitting my response to Peter Faith, the same day I received a telegram from NATO/KFOR.

It stated:

“The extremist Albanian terrorist groups (NLA) have completely withdrawn from Leshok (EM - 0357). All residents of this village were allowed to return. The village Doborote will be clean in a few hours from all extremist Albanian groups and so will the villages



Glogi (EM - 0457) and Teartse (EM - 0457). The armed Albanian extremist groups are still inside but plan to withdraw soon.”

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NATO/KFOR CONFIDENTIAL  
RELEASABLE TO THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF  
MACEDONIA

Operations and Intelligence Exchange

CONTROL NUMBER  
YEAR: 2001  
NCCC NO: 2423

1. ORIGINATOR: KFOR -

TIME SUBMITTED: 26 1425 July 01

TIME OF RESPONSE

2. SUBJECT: Tetovo Withdraw

3. Intelligence. The following information was given to the NCCC MOD by Col Finney of the NATO Team.

In the Tetovo area: The EAAG (NLA) has completely withdrawn from the village of LESOK (EM0357). The villagers are being allowed to return. Within a few hours, the village of DROBROTE (EM0661) will also be free of the EAAG. In the villages of GOGI (EM0559) and TEARCE (EM0457) the EAAG are still in the villages, but plan on moving out. No time table given.

4. DISSEMINATED TO: MOD

5. REMARKS / ACTION TAKEN:

RECORDED BY: (SIGNATURE)

\* TURKEY RECOGNIZES THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA  
WITH ITS CONSTITUTIONAL NAME

-1-

NATO/KFOR CONFIDENTIAL  
RELEASABLE TO THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF  
MACEDONIA

The above is a copy of the statement.

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Regardless of the correspondence I had with Peter Faith, we found out that a large group of terrorists had arrived from somewhere and based itself in the northeast of these villages.

I gave orders to reinforce our ARM units and take position at 500 metres southeast of the Tetovo - Iazhintse road and then launch military actions from the distance against known terrorists positions, north of the village Glogi, that were illegally taken after the July 5, 2001 ceasefire Agreement. I was expecting Peter Faith to react about this but at the same time I wanted to let him know that we respected the agreement and were prepared to immediately act, with force if necessary, against all terrorist activities taken outside of the Agreement.

President Boris Trajkovski called me and asked me to go to his office. There I found Peter Faith, General Lange and the NATO Commander in the Republic of Macedonia. After I explained the situation, the President supported me in my approach to deploy the ARM units, i.e. the entire procedure that General Headquarters undertook in the spirit of the July 6, 2001 Agreement. On that occasion Peter Faith asked the President to order me to stop the actions of ARM on the grounds that tomorrow he would be going to Prizren and that he guaranteed the complete withdrawal of the terrorists from that space.

Throughout our entire conversation at the President's office, Peter Faith, in his explanation as to why the terrorists came to the

Macedonian villages, where no action had taken place before the ceasefire, said the following:

“It is my understanding that the Ministry of the Interior had armed the residents at that end (referring to the Macedonians) and the challenge of ethnic Albanian armed rebel groups was to disarm them.”

In front of the President I argued the opposite because I had no such knowledge. But at that meeting the President accepted Faith’s explanation and requested that ARM stop the action and, once again, provided the terrorists with the opportunity to withdraw from that space and fully agreed to comply with the peaceful resolution of the conflict. On July 27 and 28, 2001 the field was cleaned, the terrorists withdrew. But residents displaced from the above mentioned villages did not return.

A day or two later, after we had our conversation with Peter Faith at the President’s office, Mr. Stoianovski - Bombai led a delegation of displaced persons from the Tetovo villages. They came to President Trajkovski’s office. Boris Trajkovski also asked me to attend that meeting and told me: “Pay attention and listen to what the locals from Tetovo have to say.” All speakers at that meeting were decisive with their statements: “After the police left the village, it gave us Kalashnikov rifles and 100 rounds of bullets to defend ourselves, and then came the terrorists with a list and took the weapons.” One among the locals present at the President’s office, who was about 30 years old, said: “Mr. President, I have not served in the army, so when they gave me the Kalashnikov and the 100 bullets and when the terrorists came, I fired all the bullets and ran away. They gave us weapons and ammunition but did not teach us how to defend ourselves if we were outnumbered!”

The so-called NLA, to make it known that it was present on the ground, especially where ARM units were present, occasionally appeared in the open in small groups.

After the signing of the ceasefire Agreement, we agreed with NATO to allow the return of the displaced people. Most displaced persons of Albanian ethnicity started to return to their homes in July 2001.

With the return of these residents in villages Lavtsi, Seltse, Giermo, Shipkovitsa, Brodets, Veshala, Veitse and in the city Tetovo itself, conditions were created for some of the terrorists to again get involved in these villages. ARM personnel who were stationed in positions in the above mentioned villages, and in that region, began to notice the presence of armed uniformed groups of 5 to 7 men always on the move, creating an impression that they were present everywhere, some even appeared in the city Tetovo. Some individuals, with their appearance, began to provoke the ARM units in those positions. They were making our soldiers and officers very nervous, which could have led to a shootout and resumption of the conflict.

In addition to my written warning to Peter Faith about this, the public, through the media, issued a statement and in that statement there were requests that ARM units be ordered to act: "For as long as there are terrorists, unauthorized uniformed armed men present at 250 to 300 metres in front of any ARM unit position, they must be fired upon without warning."

After that statement was issued by the media, i.e. for ARM units to open fire on terrorist targets, the terrorists scaled down their intentional appearances but still made their presence known in urban areas, especially at night. These armed provocations were also frequent right after the OSCE monitoring missions were retreating. Armed provocations were frequent in Tetovo, especially at the positions where law enforcement officers were stationed, particularly in police stations.

The purpose of these provocations, and the level at which they were committed, was to create the impression that the city was full of terrorists. This information was introduced by the Ministry of the Interior during our top state leadership meetings, i.e. "Tetovo is occupied by terrorists and should be freed, an operation needs to be performed to clean the city". This kind of day to day tension inflamed the meetings and the media.

Defense Minister Vlado Buchkovski and I knew that they were only provocations - they even attacked our military barracks in Tetovo only to provoke ARM, and this provocation did not come from the

terrorists but from other structures which were saying: “The Army does not want to help the police.” Segments of this thesis were found in media through statements like: “The generals are not determined to use ARM.”

According to the daily reports from the commanders on the ground the story was somewhat different; provocations were caused by the police and then they were seeking help from ARM to use artillery and other combat means.

### Combat Report R - 4192/2023

Quote: “From the very beginning of the performance of the operation, cooperation and coordination with the Ministry of the Interior was well-organized and implemented, which had a lasting positive outcome in the implementation of the plan to break the terrorists in the assigned area of responsibility. On top of that, in the coming period, especially after the signing of the ceasefire Agreement and implementation of the President’s agreement to deal with the crisis, the coordination of activities was not at the required level and there were more frequent requests by the Interior Ministry for ARM to engage in clean up performances, tasks delegated to the police.”

In addition to the above assessment I would like to present the following examples:

1. During the attack on the terrorists on July 23, 2001, representatives of the Ministry of the Interior persistently demanded artillery weapon’s action on settlements of the villages Leshok and Teartse, and this was to be based on unverified data and incomplete estimates.
2. On July 24, 2001 the police station near the cable car line was attacked from the Tekie facility. At this point the Ministry of the Interior demanded that it be given an armoured transport vehicle. The Chief of 15<sup>th</sup> PBR was also pressured to improperly use the tanks. The request was improper because the intensity of the attack was not strong enough to warrant the fire power of the tanks and did not put the police post in jeopardy.

3. On July 27, 2001, around 18:30 hours, the Tetovo Chief of Police asked for a helicopter over alleged threats to the police forces in the area of the village Iegunovtse. We verified that there were indeed skirmishes in the area but it was determined that these skirmishes were between the Interior Ministry's reservists and the Interior Ministry's active members.

4. On July 29, 2001 an attack on the police checkpoint in the area of the Tetovo stadium was reported by members of the Interior Ministry. The control point in the Department of the Interior Headquarters in Tetovo received confirmation of the attack, which led to the conclusion that the action and the attack were invented. At the same time, someone from a considerable distance decided to open fire on the ARM barracks. No one was harmed. The activity was short, about 5 minutes, too short for us to detect the target and take action against it with our artillery. A short time later there was a reaction from law enforcement officers who demanded to know from ARM: "Why do you not help us?!" Immediately after that I received a telephone call on my cell phone from President Boris Trajkovski who had a question for me. He asked: "Are you performing actions and who gave the order?!" My response was: "At this given moment we are not doing anything because the activity against us was very short. In the past few days, however, we acted appropriately, effectively and efficiently, respecting the ceasefire order and appropriately and adequately responded to direct attacks against our units." The same day around 16:00 hours I was asked by the Operational team in ARM General Headquarters if I was familiar with the situation in the village Iegunovtse and whether anyone had requested reinforcements from me. The answer of course was "No"! After we investigated this supposed request for reinforcements, where these supposed actions by ARM were taking place, we found that there was absolutely no evidence of any such action.

The previous four examples clearly show that there were requests for ARM to become involved in performing police duties, as well as accusations that ARM did not cooperate with the Interior Ministry police forces.

- R - 4192/2023

UB/CA  
Commander of OTG - 1  
Brigadier General  
Josip Boshevski

The following report, sent to me by Brigadier General Josip Boshevski, outlines the cooperation between ARM and the Interior Ministry in the Tetovo region.

From August 7, 2001, str.dov. 07 - 89/275

“I would like to familiarize and inform you that the last time I asked ARM for help, i.e. to support the law enforcement officers in carrying out combat actions, ARM was charged with not responding and not providing appropriate assistance.”

“On August 6, 2001, around 23:00 hours, small arms weapons fire was heard coming from the police post station at the stadium. Someone was firing in the direction of the Drenovets settlement where several hand grenades and tear gas missiles had exploded. The explosions were felt in the barracks and in parts of the urban settlement.”

I personally contacted the ARM unit which, according to the Chief of General Headquarters, was stationed near the police station at the stadium at a distance of about 10 to 15 metres, so I asked: “Is there any action in the direction of Drenovets?” I received the following response: “The police are performing actions but there are no direct threats to us.”

Immediately after that I got in touch with the duty officer at the Interior Ministry Headquarters at SVR Tetovo. I was interested to know about the situation in the field. I was told that several shots were fired in Drenovets or in Poroi. I insisted that the police not act unnecessarily if the units were not directly fired on.

Around 06:30 hours I received information from the Tetovo Interior Ministry duty team that the posts in the villages Ratae and Zhilche

had been attacked. Strong and intense detonations were heard, probably caused by the action of the police with RPGs and RRFs. I insisted that I needed more accurate information about the actions taking place, about which I later received unrealistic information claiming that the actions were taking place in Dzhepchishte Region towards the village Neproshteno and that those positions were attacked from the villages Trebon and Erebino and required artillery response action. After that an official from the Ministry of the Interior appeared and said: "Where the action now took place, go right for about 200 metres." And even though this was not the action of OTG - 1, we found no action at all had taken place, no fire at all was opened, which led me to believe that there was a lack of understanding about what was going on.

I personally insisted that the actions be stopped so that we could get more accurate information as to where the terrorists were located but I was told that: "The Internal Ministry leads and commands these forces and they are all volunteers with aims to protect the Macedonian population in the villages Zhilche, Ratoe and others."

I believe their intent was to involve ARM in a situation that was not a threat to the security of our forces. I also believe that the kind of operations conducted by the Interior Ministry forces were outside of the mandate for performing operations and which, down the line, would adversely affect the future and ongoing political maintenance of the security situation in the area.

UB/BSH  
Commander  
Brigadier General: Josip Boshevski

- R - 1378/831

These and similar kinds of reports, in those days, i.e. at the time of the ceasefire, were coming out from all the ground force commands, particularly from Tetovo Region. Tensions grew as ways to resolve the war crisis were sought. And as Minister of Defense, Vlado Buchkovski, at an official state level, kept pointing out these incidents, this kind of information of course filtered out to the OSCE and to Peter Faith who stood behind NATO, misrepresenting the



situation in the Republic of Macedonia, in order to cause general chaos. All this was well-known to President Trajkovski but he was in no position to do anything. He was under constant pressure from his party partners who wanted to initiate the idea of “Dividing the Republic of Macedonia and creating some larger state within some other country!”

I often received calls from the President issuing requests to order ARM to perform actions in certain areas at the request of the Internal Ministry. Many times I had to remind him that we had no knowledge of disturbances in those areas and no action was necessary. But then he would say: “Okay, do as I ordered, I will talk to you later.” Then, 10 to 15 minutes later, when he called me again, he would say: “I had to tell you that because Liupcho Georgievski and Liube Boskovski were here, in the meantime you do your job just the way we had agreed.” By that he meant that I had to control the situation and comply by the ceasefire Agreement and not allow police provocations to destabilize the situation. Very often the President would come to General Headquarters to discuss issues related to the situation, and how to resolve them. On one occasion he said to me: “I invited B. Gerovski, a journalist for discussion. I believe he was right in what he said to me. He said: ‘Mr. President, everyone is now spitting at you, but you must hang on to your ideas and support the plan for a peaceful resolution to the crisis and, later, when our children peacefully go on holiday in Ohrid we all will be grateful to you’...” Of course, the President was threatened in various ways, pushed to act differently, even threatened with the liquidation of certain individuals.

Despite the Agreement we had signed to end the crisis just like it was agreed, tensions kept escalating and people were pulling in opposite directions, which made it harder to control the situation on the ground, especially after the special police units - volunteers - “Lions” became involved after the ceasefire Agreement was signed and since the negotiations in Ohrid were started.

I repeatedly asked for unity in the command and management structure of the security forces, as was regulated under the defense act during a state of war. I wanted all the security forces in the zone where military actions were taking place to be placed under a single

command in order to successfully achieve planned objectives - i.e. under the most senior commander of ARM. That principle is present in all armies and countries. In the Republic of Macedonia, however, from the outset of the military crisis, the President was the Supreme Commander who commanded ARM and the Prime Minister commanded the police, as regulated by peacetime law. But because of varying political objectives there was lack of unity in the management and command system. In fact, the disunity at the top level increased with time until it became dysfunctional. Fortunately there was agreement and coordination at the lower levels between the commanders of ARM and the police, especially the active segment of the police force.

While negotiations were taking place in Ohrid, the situation on the ground was getting tighter and harder to control. In Tetovo, especially in Polog and in the Macedonian Shar Planina villages, there were provocations taking place, hour to hour. The road Poroi - Iazhintse was often closed with barricades put there by the inhabitants themselves. Armed and uniformed groups then began to appear, placing illegal police checkpoints and hindering movement. Even humanitarian convoys and the local population were blockaded. With the withdrawal of the police forces from that space, opportunities for terrorist expansion were opened, especially in the countryside at the villages Poroi, Dzepchishte, Neproshteno, Barbara, or more precisely where ARM used to previously act and had positions. In the Kumanovo - Karadak Region, the situation was relatively calm with few attempt at causing incidents and even less serious provocations.

The weapons given to the civilian population in the Tetovo area by list, about which the terrorists knew, were eventually taken away from the Macedonians by the terrorists (as reported by the residents who had fled).

To avoid friction between the forces, I asked for the police units to be vacated from common positions where ARM units and the police existed in close proximity, especially in some of the places in the city Tetovo. I also did this so that we didn't have situations where someone may say: "ARM does not help the police when it's attacked".

At one time, during the negotiations in Ohrid, Liube Boshkovski jokingly said to me: “Legend, the communists have pressured you to hold me back!” “No!” I said to him. “It is not like that, we have allowed the terrorists to spread by using our mistakes. Someone is intentionally doing this.”

I said to him: “I have information from the Macedonian refugees, from discussions that took place with President Trajkovski, that you gave the refugees arms to defend themselves when the police abandoned the countryside villages.”

But Liube Boshkovski, in his own way and style, denied it.

Right from the start I was quite close to Liube Boshkovski, Minister of the Interior. When he was appointed Minister of the Interior Ministry, he often and almost always attended the command post with me. He even sought my advice and, on several occasions, followed it, especially in tough situations. I could openly discuss many problems and issues with him. He always tried, wholeheartedly, to follow the guidelines set out by Prime Minister Georgievski. At one time the President of the Republic of Macedonia asked to have Boshkovski removed. During one of our discussions Boshkovski said to me: “Hey Legend, this guy (referring to the President) has intentions to let me go but let me say this... I can have him out much faster than he can have me out... so nothing will happen...” All this, i.e. attempts to create general chaos in Macedonia, emerged when the negotiations in Ohrid started. By all means, many attempts were made to involve ARM in taking a greater military role in the operation but the time was not right especially since conditions were put on these operations - the negotiations were underway and NATO was already fully involved in resolving the crisis. The OSCE too, with its observers, was there every day on the ground in areas where ARM units were stationed.

President Trajkovski was under constant pressure to give orders for ARM to get it more involved. The rationale was that “this would give us an advantage at the negotiations.” But before that, at a time when the military crisis could have been solved by military means, they would not allow ARM to do its job, and now that NATO was

invited inside, they wanted our army to get involved. Why? So that Macedonia would fall into chaos, a repeat of Bosnia? The greatest complaints made about the whole situation and about who was putting obstacles were about the Defense Minister Vlado Buckovski and General Pande Petrovski. They were the “guiltiest of them all” they said because they “did not want to use ARM”. But if we examine Article 28 of the Law on Defense, we will find that it says: “The President of the Republic of Macedonia is in command of ARM through the Minister of Defense”. And General Headquarters is only a professional body in the Ministry of Defense. This Act was passed or amended when Liuben Paunovski was defense minister. Therefore all orders issued by the President had to go through the Ministry of Defense. So, I can’t see how I was to blame for “not wanting to employ ARM”? Later, after the crisis was over, that part of the Defense Law was amended.

Using the general condition after the ceasefire and NATO’s engagement in the military crisis resolution, the so-called NLA Command wanted to relocate from Prizren to the Republic of Macedonia.

The so-called NLA made attempts to conquer and secure Popova Shapka as a suitable place for its command post but failed. It, however, did not give up so it went looking in Tetovo Region and selected Shipkovitsa as its municipality.

We did not act in Shipkovitsa but held Shipkovsko tekie. The population of that village had evacuated on March 25 and 26, 2001. After the ceasefire, the population, i.e. the displaced people from the wider region made an agreement with NATO to be allowed to return to their abandoned homes. Among the first to start returning were the residents of Shipkovitsa.

On July 21, 2001, from 16:45 to 17:05 hours, a KFOR SH-47 helicopter was observed landing in Shipkovitsa and unloading equipment and people, at the same time (16:45 to 17:05 hours) a KFOR SH-47 helicopter landed in the village Brodets as reported by the ARM commander of air defense.

In the coming days I received a report from Josip Boshevski, Commander of OTG-1 by which I was informed that there was a group of armed and uniformed men in Shipkovitsa. I was also informed that the OSCE often frequented Shipkovitsa. On one occasion even the commander of the Kosovo KFOR “South” Brigade was seen in Tetovo. On July 25, 2001, from 13:53 to 14:30 hours and from 16:00 to 16:30 hours, a KFOR SH-47 and a KFOR SH-53 helicopter landed in the village Brodets. All these KFOR helicopter flights and landings were not registered by NATO. This is the explanation we received from General Lange, NATO commander in the Republic of Macedonia. Above all the complaining we did, we also sent them a warning letter, through the Centre of contact with NATO-KFOR, warning them that if these things continued to take place we would be forced to perform combat actions.

Basically what took place, in regards to the presence of these helicopters, was KFOR making preparations to accommodate the relocation of the so-called NLA Command from Prizren to Shipkovitsa. But in a response I received from KFOR, as a result of enquiries I made, I was told that they were installing a set of certain systems so that they could liaise with the observers during the implementation of the “Harvest” project, i.e. the collection of weapons. I often ran into General Lange, primarily because he was appointed commander of the “Harvest” project in the Republic of Macedonia. From the very beginning when we had met, since April 2001, Lange left me with the impression that he was an honest and sincere person and that he wanted to help the Republic of Macedonia. He retired after his mission in Macedonia. In one of our conversations when I pointed out some facts that KFOR transferred the so-called NLA Command from Prizren to Shipkovitsa, he said: “You are right, but please know that I am a professional and I am looking forward to going into retirement.”

As the talks in Ohrid were unfolding, the situation on the ground was getting more complicated by the frequent military actions. The President and his advisers started to call me more frequently, by telephone, giving me tasks to update them on terrorist whereabouts and activities. They even demanded to know why I hadn’t given orders to attack them, etc!

I had no idea exactly what was happening in Ohrid, but from what President Trajkovski was telling me, I was in agreement. The president was under strong pressure to order ARM to take more extensive measures for the sake of “giving our side more of an advantage at the talks” But at the same time I knew that the President, ever since the beginning of the crisis, was against the use of force in resolving the conflict. With regards to the terrorists on the ground, as far as I was concerned, there was nothing unexpected, at least on the ground where we had ARM units deployed. Our units were well armed and had solid combat experience and our system of management and command were fully operational. On top of that NATO and the OSCE, with their presence on the ground, and our constant contact with Peter Faith and he with the ethnic Albanian armed groups, were deterrents for any escalation of violence. Also the Ministry of Defense and General Headquarters were always in direct contact with the President of the Republic of Macedonia. Peter Faith was well informed regarding all events in our government and its relations with the President. I was one of Faith’s direct contacts and made sure he was kept up to date, especially on the situation and actions of the Internal Ministry.

On August 5, 2001 I was unpleasantly surprised - when over the television on TV A-1, at 17:00 hours, a “state secret” was announced on the air (DT 07-70 / 08.05.2001).

The “state secret” called for:

1. “APM, with the necessary structure and number of forces, was to enter Tetovo to prevent the capture of the city by terrorist groups of the so-called NLA and to provide security to the Tetovo residents and their properties.
2. ARM is to secure the road Tetovo - Iazhintse with aims at ensuring the safety of traffic and to stop the penetration of terrorist groups from Shara to the villages in Polog. Security in that direction must be continuously maintained until the next order.

3. General Headquarters is to make a plan, prepare and implement the tasks as outlined in points 1 and 2 of this order within 3 days of receiving the order.

4. The Chief of Staff of General Headquarters is to provide information and updates on actions taken in the latest 24 hours before the expiration of the previous point.”

At first I could not believe it; I thought it was pure provocation! Imagine a document labeled “state secret” being exposed on television! Or a secret order issued by the Supreme Commander to the Chief of Staff over public television!?! But then I began to have doubts because the order called for an operation to take place in Tetovo, but against whom? Our ARM units were in Tetovo, not only in the barracks but also all around the city. Another thing: there were people living in the city, both Macedonians and Albanians, and the city was functioning normally. There were police stations and military checkpoints inside the city. Full of anxiety, I called Colonel Sime Spaskovski, Chief of my cabinet, and sent him to the Parliament building to ascertain whether or not such an order really existed as was reported on television.

He went and soon returned with a piece of paper, sent via fax from Ohrid. It was signed by the President with content numbered items 1 to 4.

I still did not believe what I was seeing: I had several telephone conversations with the President that same day and not once did he mention anything about this order. This order did not look right; it was not something that ARM could decide to do so lightly! This called for a military operation involving ARM in Tetovo, a populated city! I tried to get hold of Vlado Buchkovski, the Minister of Defense, but he was away in Ohrid and was not available.

One thing I was sure of, besides the order being signed by Boris Trajkovski, it was not done under his free will because of its content and the style looked like it was written by one of his advisers - which I later confirmed.

But, regardless of what I thought, above all, here in my hand I had a written order from my Supreme Commander; and it was not a joke. I called a General Headquarters meeting and issued directions to start planning the operation to secure Tetovo and the road Poroi - Iazhintse.

The preliminary part of the decision I made read:

“In the coming days you are to prepare and facilitate the operation for securing Tetovo and the road in the Tetovo - Iazhintse direction by grouping the main forces in the city. The auxiliary forces are to secure the road in the Tetovo-Iazhnitse direction in order to prevent the capture of the city Tetovo by terrorist groups from the so-called NLA and to provide protection to the Tetovo residents and their properties. The anti-terrorist units, in collaboration with neighbouring units, artillery and air support, are to ensure the safety of traffic on the road Tetovo - Iazhintse and to prevent penetration of terrorist groups to the Shar Planina villages in Polog”...

Readiness for the attack: August 8, 2001.

The following units are to be engaged in this operation..... etc.

A plan of operation, without consideration from an order from the Supreme Commander, had to be approved by the Security Council. For that I scheduled a meeting to take place in Ohrid on August 6, 2001.

I continued trying to contact Vlado Buchkovski but without success. The journalists too, still in Ohrid, tried to get a statement from him because he had not received such an order from Boris Trajkovski either. He was only informed from the television report, which needed to be verified.

The next day, August 6, 2001 at 07:00 hours, Minister Vlado Buchkovski arrived in his office. I took with me the orders I had received by fax the previous day and went to see him. I said to him: “On the basis of these orders, we have prepared a plan of operation and I expect that today you will call us to the Security Council meeting.” He took the paper, looked it over, looked at me angrily



and immediately picked up the telephone and began dialing. He wanted to know directly from the President why his department, the Ministry of Defense, was bypassed and why the order had been sent directly to the Chief of Staff of General Headquarters. Minister Buchkovski was correct in his assertions because what happened was not in accordance with Article 28 of the Law on Defense. From listening to his side of the conversation with Trajkovski, I got the impression that the order was prepared by Nikola Dimitrov, the President's national security adviser. Among other things, Buchkovski said: "Mr. President, Nikola Dimitrov instead of walking the streets of New York, will be spending his time in Idrizovo Prison because he gave a state document deemed top secret to the media!" At that time Nikola Dimitrov was appointed Ambassador to the United States.

The media and the press somehow picked up on what Buchkovski said to Trajkovski and that sentence was interpreted as a threat, i.e. Buchkovski threatening Trajkovski with prison. I later found out that the "state secret" was leaked to the TV A1 television program by Liubomir Frchkovski because the Ministry of Defense had raised an indictment against him.

"Thanks" to that press release announcing the secret order to the public, innocent soldiers were killed in Karpalak on August 8, 2001, about whom we will present more information later.

As I expected, the same day we were invited to attend the Security Council meeting in Ohrid. That day I was ready to resign if the Council decided to implement the Tetovo operation because I knew the intentions and purpose of this military operation, especially because of the way the order was issued by the Supreme Commander. Sending orders via the public medium is unheard of in military history... it is simply not practiced, especially in modern times with all the technical means available to us.

The meeting was scheduled late in the afternoon. Besides the President, the meeting was attended by the Prime Minister, the Speaker of Parliament, the Ministers of Defense and the Ministry of the Interior, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, myself, Branko Tsrvenkovski as leader of the SDSM party, Professor Dr. Vlado

Popovski and Professor Dr. Traian Gotsevski as members of the Council, who in previous meetings on such issues had not been invited.

Right at the start of the session Dr. Vlado Buchkovski, Minister of Defense, took his turn to speak. He reacted sharply and demanded to know why the issued order by-passed his department, quoting Article 28 of the Law on Defense which was violated. During the discussions, from a legal aspect, various interpretations were offered to justify what had been done, but to put an end to the idle chat, I interrupted and said: “We are not going to follow the order because it was not issued legally. The Supreme Commander may now issue a direct order to use ARM, under the Constitution, and that is why I prepared a plan for an operation, if that is what you truly will allow.” They were a little surprised, but I pulled the card showing that the plan was ready and it was now entirely up to the President to approve it. Immediately after I completed my report, people began to ask questions, wanting to know from the President if there was going to be a lot of civilian casualties and if there was going to be much destruction, etc.”

I asked the president a short question. I said: “Mr. President, you know that Tetovo is an urban city and that the road Poroi - Dzhepchishte - Iazhintse is entirely built up with residential homes on one side of the road. I obtained an order from you and prepared a plan and if you approve my plan I will make sure that it is implemented, but the population of these villages has to be moved so that there will be no civilian casualties.”

Trajkovski looked at me and said: “General, your plan is no good, make a new plan. I will not sign this plan!” I then said: “This plan was drafted in accordance with your orders; I don’t know how to draft another plan without knowing what you want us to do!” He then suggested that I: “Send the tanks on a trip down the road from Tetovo to Iazhintse.” I then said: “Mr. President I am a professional and I will not risk losing my tanks and members of my forces... if, like you say, there are dangerous activities going on in Poroi.”

President Trajkovski asked for a break to calm the situation down. During the break Prime Minister Georgievski followed me and said:

“General Pande, please explain your plan one more time.” I went to the map and, in specific details, explained the plan to him. I then went out to the balcony to light a cigarette. Vlado Popovski came out with me and said: “The plan was good, don’t worry.” Why he said that I do not know - but I suspect that they all thought that I was dragging my feet when it came to deploying ARM.

After the break the Prime Minister immediately took his turn on the floor and said: “President Trajkovski, the plan is okay and if you don’t want to sign it, I will sign it.” Liube Boskovski was sitting beside me and immediately jumped up and said: “And I will sign it too... and let them take me to The Hague.”

I looked at them both and thought to myself; what does this look like? On one side we have support for the framework agreement and on the other side they want to launch an operation in a sensitive part of our country. When they put a stop to the military operation in the village Dzhephishite on March 27, 2001, Dosta Dimovska said to me: “And what do you want, General, for the people to rise against us?!” I was considering resigning right then because things were not working. When we had the opportunity to resolve the crisis by military means they would not allow it! And now they insisted on a complex operation in Tetovo, at any cost. Why? But in every case I worked with him, the President was absolutely sure and conscious of what an operation meant. This time, however, I suspected that he was forced to sign the order.

I was determined to find a compromise to the current approach so I made the following suggestion. I said: “The units planned for this operation will be stationed in Erebino - in our facility, 2 to 4 km away from the road Porod - Iazhintse. If for any reason the road is closed then we will open it by military actions. On August 7, 2001 we were planning to move some of our units to the areas of operation (Erebino and beyond) and from Skopje through Giorche Petrov to Erebino”. This proposal was accepted by all and Trajkovski’s earlier plan was not signed. And this is how the meeting ended at the villa in Ohrid. All that remained now for August 7, 2001 was for our units to March to Erebino and prepare for an eventual operation in the Tetovo - Iazhintse vicinity.

## KARPALAK

The entire public was informed about the operation “liberation of Tetovo” and about securing the Tetovo - Iazhintse road on television by the TV-A1 program, and the next day by the entire press. You can be certain that NATO and the so-called NLA were also informed and the NLA was rushing to prepare for it by bringing reinforcements to Tetovo. At that time they did not have enough fighters on the ground to withstand our advance. But they needed to impede us, for at least a few days, if not more, enough time until the negotiations were completed. It was also necessary to destroy the Skopje - Tetovo road, because it was the right time to block traffic again. The space Karpalak was definitely the best place for demolishing the road because there were no other easy passes to get around it. That is why Karpalak, since the beginning of the war crisis, was guarded by a police checkpoint. Unfortunately the police checkpoint was withdrawn, without the knowledge of the Ministry of Defense. It was withdrawn two days before the “Karpalak” incident. Someone certainly gave the order for the police post to vacate Karpalak. That someone was not known and neither was the reason for the withdrawal. But the only people that had the authority to give such an order were those of the Interior Ministry. A few days earlier, Liube Boskovski had taken a tour of Tetovo and Gostivar Regions and when he was returning to Skopje he passed through Karpalak. From what was discovered, while his armoured vehicles were passing through Karpalak Pass his entourage opened fire on the hills on both sides of the Karpalak site. That same evening, the media reported that the “Interior Minister was attacked at Karpalak”. I was surprised to hear that because, according to our information, there were no terrorists in that space. And this particular region was outside of the area covered by our military actions. Also, traffic from Skopje to Tetovo and from Tetovo to Skopje as well as Tetovo - Gostivar - Mavrovo was moving well without any incident. We also had OSCE and NATO presence there which had pacified the entire area. In any case, I contacted the NATO Ambassador to see what he had to say about this incident; i.e. the terrorists breaching the Agreement. He gave me a short reply, he said: “Do not worry; it is a tiny bit of media propaganda.” I found his response very strange so I contacted Liube Boshkovski and told him what the Ambassador had said. Then, in his own style of dialogue, Liube said to me: “To

let the villains know that we are here and ready for them.” I smiled and said nothing.

Taking into consideration everything that had happened I ordered air force defence and our combat helicopters to follow our units marching from Skopje to Eribeno to ensure their safety. Our units were expected to go on the march, in columns of two, on August 7, 2001. And even though each commander was required to organize his own security for the units under his command, as required in such circumstances, I gave them air support anyway just to be on the safe side.

On August 7, 2001 a visit to Leshok was organized by the Coordinating Body. The visitors were scheduled to travel along the Tetovo - Iazhintse road. Minister Vlado Buchkovski decided to join some of the displaced persons in this visit, primarily to ascertain whether the road was really closed and to see if the task the Supreme Commander ordered on July 5, 2001 had actually been carried out. Accompanying Buchkovski was Secretary Vlado Giorevski. Because the Minister knew that ARM units would be marching from Skopje heading for Erebino on August 7, 2001, Giorevski called me from Leshok and said: “General, the Minister asked me to ask you, to please delay the march to avoid any unforeseen incidents while we are returning to Skopje; not to provoke the terrorists to block the Leshok - Poroi road so that we and the displaced people can get back to Skopje.” I said: “Okay Giorevski, no problem, I will reschedule the march for tomorrow - we have time.” According to the order issued by the Supreme Commander I was given three days to prepare for this operation, therefore, instead of marching the units on August 7, 2001, I would reschedule the march for August 8, 2001 at 09:00 hours.

The units from the Second Army Corps - Bitola were deployed in Tetovo Region since the beginning, since we began to execute military operations. Exchange of the units was done as follows: Bitola - Gostivar-Kichevo - Tetovo and Bitola - Prilep - Skopje, Tetovo. There was a flow of military vehicles on these routes on a daily basis. This activity was the responsibility of the corps commander and the commanders of the brigades. On August 8, 2001 the Prilep Commander had plans to replace part of his artillery unit

stationed in Tetovo, with new soldiers - as was required. The unit was traveling along Prilep - Skopje Giorche Petrov - Tetovo. It was pure coincidence that the Prilep unit was separated by about 30 minutes of time from the combat units which, at 09:00 hours, pulled out from Skopje and headed for Erebino along the Tetovo highway. The “architect” of this incident wanted, at any cost, to stop the Tetovo operation from taking place, which, according to a TV - A1 report, planned and organized an ambush and to demolish the Tetovo highway at Karpalak.

The “architect” of the incident, assumed that the military vehicles traveling on the Tetovo highway were the leading part of the military column marching from Skopje to Erebino, prepared an ambush at 09:30 hours and acted against those vehicles. This gruesome and cowardly act by the terrorists inflicted heavy losses against innocent Macedonian soldiers, but failed to blow up the highway and stop the units from marching from Skopje to Erebino, even although they had prepared about 200 kg of explosives to go off. And why did they fail? They failed because our combat helicopters were up in the air tracking the column’s movement and keeping an eye on the tanks and transporters for the planned operation. About 10 to 15 minutes later, when we detected problems, our helicopters attacked the area where the road was mined, leaving the terrorists no time to activate the explosives. Later we found wires laid down and explosives in a channel under the highway.

The air defense report filed for that day, among other things, said that five minutes before the ambush a KFOR helicopter was spotted flying in the air space above Karpalak. Two KFOR Jeeps were also seen in the Karpalak area. When they spotted our helicopters one escaped to Skopje and the other hid in Novo Selo.

Stavre Dzhikov, the public prosecutor for the Republic of Macedonia paid a short visit to the Karpalak site where the soldiers were executed by the terrorists. After examining the site he said that this entire incident was “just illogical”, but then a while later he sent me a letter requesting information on the Tetovo incident.

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REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA  
PUBLIC PROSECUTOR OF THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA  
Str.dob. No. 31/2001  
Skopje, August 6, 2001

To: THE CHIEF OF STAFF OF ARM GENERAL  
HEADQUARTERS  
Lt. General Pande Petrovski  
SKOPJE

Mr. Chief of Staff of General Headquarters,

You are required to provide us with documents and data, with a degree of secrecy which you will determine, so that this data can be used in an appropriate manner in performing the duties of the Attorney General for prosecution.

Please reply to this request as soon as possible.

/BG PUBLIC OB VINIGL  
THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA  
Stavre Dzhikov

The above is a copy of the letter sent by Stavre Dzhikov, Public Prosecutor of the Republic of Macedonia.

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When we look at the date when the questions from Stavre Dzhikov were sent to me and to Defense Minister Vlado Buckovski, we begin to understand what effects the leaked order, leaked through TV A-1, had on what took place.

Quote:

To the Chief of Staff of ARM General Headquarters  
General Pande Petrovski

Mr. Chief of Staff of General Headquarters,

“The Public Prosecutor’s Office is continuously taking measures and actions to prosecute the perpetrators of crimes carried out in the Republic of Macedonia in connection with the armed actions of the so-called NLA Albanian armed groups taken in order to threaten the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Republic of Macedonia and its territorial whole and split part of its territory in order to create a Greater Albania or Greater Kosovo. For the longer part, these armed actions, perpetrated by Albanian terrorist groups, have caused enormous consequences in the life and health of the soldiers, officers and the civilian population, which has been subjected to unimaginable suffering, forcible expulsions from their century-old homes and exposed to great danger for long periods of time; all this manifested for the acceptance of occupied territories in Macedonia, which is contrary to the Constitution and laws.”

“By the powers of Article 144 parts 2 and 3 of the Criminal Code, the public prosecutor is prepared to take measures to examine the large number of statements made by citizens who claim to have been left without any protection or fulfillment of obligations of the defense of the territory and protection of citizens, especially pronounced in certain regions where citizens of the Macedonian population were forcibly expelled.”

He does not say why the people were expelled and why the police stations were abandoned, and why this population was given weapons and ammunition, and who had the right to give out weapons to civilians, etc., but he asked me the following questions:

“Because of that, I am requesting that you submit the necessary information and data as follows:

During the so-called one sided apparent termination of armed actions (the so-called unconditional ceasefire - which the Government of the Republic of Macedonia accepted) most brutal ethnic cleansing in several villages in the Tetovo region took place, including the villages Leshok, Teartse, Neproshteno, Dobroshte, Otunie, Iedoartse, Varvara, Setole and other villages in the region, whose residents were extremely humiliated in front of the barrels of automatic rifles brandished by the Albanian terrorists and then entire



villages with a Macedonian population were expelled, after which robbery and pillaging of homes and property and burning of houses took place.

1. In connection with this, please inform us if, according to the plan for the defense of that region, protection from attacks by Albanian terrorists was provided for these villages? If such protection was provided, then why was the region left defenseless and the population unprotected? Why was the Macedonian population of these villages left to endure such extreme and brutal humiliation and then expelled from its homes by the barrels of automatic rifles brandished by the Albanian terrorists? Why was this population not informed in time and why was there no adequate assistance provided for a temporary relocation before the Albanian terrorist groups had attacked?"

2. Based on which document and who guaranteed that the Tetovo - Iazhintse road was safe, was that road in fact secured? And if so, what then was the reason that several villages from that region with thousands of people, were left there for more than 25 days without protection and without basic livelihood? This was a disaster for that population! Attempts to deliver food and medicine on August 4, 2001 were prevented by part of the Albanian population and by the large group of armed Albanian terrorists who examined the convoy and did not allow its passage, so the convoy turned back.

You are required to provide us with documents and data, with a degree of secrecy which you will determine, so that this data can be used in an appropriate manner in performing the duties of the Attorney General for prosecution.

Please reply to this request as soon as possible.

Public Prosecutor of the Republic of Macedonia  
Stavre Dzhikov / signature and stamp

I received the request for information one day after the Tetovo campaign order was issued, but I did not answer him immediately, as Mr. Dzhikov demanded of me. I replied on September 26, 2001.

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REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA  
MINISTRY OF DEFENCE  
October 22, 2001  
Skopje

General  
Pande Petrovski  
Advisor to the Defence Minister

TO  
THE PUBLIC PROSECUTOR  
OF THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA  
Mr. Stavre Dzhikov

5. As a soldier and as a citizen of the Republic of Macedonia, who was a direct witness to the events of the crisis in the Republic of Macedonia, I am personally interested in a full clarification of all aspects of the occurrence and the resolution of the crisis. I think that the citizens of the Republic of Macedonia have the right to know the whole truth about these events, particularly the consequences resulting from them in the highest degree, and how they were irreversibly affected in the crisis regions. Those responsible for this should and must give an account to the Macedonian citizens.

ARM DEVELOPMENT AND UTILIZATION ADVISER  
General  
Pande Petrovski

The above is a copy of the response given by General Pande Petrovski to the request made by the Public Prosecutor.

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Reply to Article - 31/2001

In regards to article st. dov. no. 31/2001, which, in addition to making a request to respond to questions, basically expresses doubts about the use of ARM in the crisis regions, in terms of the role of

the then acting Chief of Staff of ARM General Headquarters, I submit the following answers and clarifications:

1. ARM, according to the Constitution of the Republic Macedonia and the Law of Defense, was used solely at the discretion of the President of the Republic of Macedonia, i.e. the Supreme Commander of the Army. During the crisis, caused by the actions and activities of Albanian terrorist groups in the Republic of Macedonia, especially during the time I was appointed Deputy Chief of Staff of General Headquarters, all decisions were approved by the Supreme Commander of the Army and were fully performed. There are documents, plans and decisions as evidence in the archives of General Headquarters of all planned and approved operations of the Army and also of performed operations and confirmation of hostilities.

2. Following a decision made by the political leadership of the Republic of Macedonia, under the unconditional ceasefire, as of July 5, 2001 ARM remained and kept its positions on the border with Yugoslavia towards Kosovo... ARM retained all its positions and did not allow the so-called NLA to expand outside of its existing positions...

Responsibility for the space in the Poroi - Iazhintse direction and the villages s/z and i/u in the direction specified, for this period of time, about which doubts were expressed about the responsibility and use of ARM, let me say that there were police stations and police checkpoints, at the same time ARM was responsible and held Iazhintse. Why did the Interior Ministry leave those positions, i.e. abandon the police stations and checkpoints? This abandonment is responsible for the displacement of citizens, especially people of Macedonian origin in these regions - responsibility for this, obviously must also be sought in the structures of the Ministry of the Interior...

“I am assuming, and that’s the way it should be, that the Public Prosecutor knew who authorized the ceasefire, i.e. who demanded that ceasefire should take place. I never asked for a ceasefire, not in my role as Chief of Staff of General Headquarters and not as a soldier. On the other hand, in terms of my professional military

ethics, for me it would be most discouraging to allow myself to look for a ceasefire in a much weaker opponent, especially if that opponent was the enemy of the Republic of Macedonia!”

The Army of the Republic of Macedonia was prepared to militarily defeat and destroy the terrorist groups that entered the Republic of Macedonia. In the role of Chief of Staff of General Headquarters, I, together with my associates and command staff on the ground, used our experience and expertise to break and destroy the terrorists. Why they were not completely broken and destroyed, only those at the top responsible for giving the orders can better answer that question - the Army arguably knew where our top political leadership and the international factors stood.

This is a complex question whose answer cannot be found in the structures of the Army. Respecting state institutions, the Army was carrying out the orders of the Supreme Commander, as well as those who were leaning towards the termination of certain operations. As well as for this: Why was the Army given orders to prevent further military actions within certain operations - the answer to that question can be found outside of the structures of the Army.

3. At the time when I was Chief Staff of ARM General Headquarters I planned an operation to eliminate the threat of terrorist groups in the area from the village Poroi to the village Odri and presented that plan at the meeting of the Security Council on August 6, 2001. Why was my plan at the time not approved? The decision for performing this operation obviously rested with the Supreme Commander. As Chief of Staff of General Headquarters I did not receive a response. In other words, my plan to perform the operation was not approved.

4. I am not sure who was planning the military crisis in Macedonia. Besides that, who and why was controlling and who and why did not allow the Army to resolve this crisis by military means, should be more than obvious. The Army was certainly not responsible for what happened and therefore the specific answers to these questions cannot be found within the Army's structures. Therefore I too, as Chief of Staff of General Headquarters, demand answers be given to these questions.

5. As a soldier and as a citizen of the Republic of Macedonia who was a direct witness to the events of the crisis in the Republic of Macedonia, I am personally interested in a full clarification of all aspects of the occurrence and the resolution of the crisis. I think that the citizens of the Republic of Macedonia have the right to know the whole truth about these events, particularly the consequences resulting from them in the highest degree, and how they were irreversibly affected in the crisis regions. Those responsible for this should and must give an account to the Macedonian citizens.

General

Pande Petrovski / Signature

Under whose suggestion or instruction the Public Prosecutor of the Republic of Macedonia decided to ask me these questions and to seek answers from me, I can only surmise. Why was it so important to find the truth about the military crisis in the Republic of Macedonia only two days after the incident in Karpalak took place? Why not before? Even more important than that was the fact that on August 5, 2001, General Headquarters received its orders to perform an operation in Tetovo over public television. Did no one, least of all the Public Prosecutor, have a problem with that? Yet on August 6, 2001 the Public Prosecutor demanded clarifications in writing from the Defense Ministry and from the Chief of Staff of General Headquarters! Why?

Why was it like that? Why was I targeted, as mentioned in the above document, and then “Karpalak happened”? I submitted my resignation in front of the Security Council that same day, August 8, 2001.

All this was certainly motivated by individuals in the Government of the Republic of Macedonia to promote the idea that “Minister Vlado Buchkovski and General Pande Petrovski did not want to carry out the Supreme Commander’s orders!” And look... “Karpalak happened!”

Much later Professor Liubomir Frchkovski, who at the time was adviser to the President, in a biweekly “Forum” after the talks in Ohrid, talking about the talks, among other things, said: “That which

we were attempting to confirm and convince of, all the time, happened on August 5, 2001.” Unfortunately he did not say exactly what they were attempting to confirm and who they were trying to convince! He mentioned no names as to who was involved in this. He continued: “Namely there was a line in SDSM which blocked the Army from performing actions. The President sent a written order to ARM to perform an operation but the staff of General Headquarters tried to hide that order, which is why we tried through A1 television that evening to publicly announce it so that the Ministry of Defense could no longer hide it.” I have no comment regarding this statement because, as I pointed out, there is no such “order” in the archives of the General Headquarters with which ARM refused to comply. Every decision was taken to the Security Council of which Dr. Frchkovski was not a member and did not attend its sessions. Also, after that order was publicly announced on August 5, 2001, like I said earlier, General Headquarters did prepare a plan and presented it to the entire Security Council at its meeting.

I am writing about all this, not to defend myself or the Ministry of Defense, but to bring light to the heinous crimes that were committed in Karpalak at that time when innocent young soldiers, fighters and defenders of the Republic of Macedonia were killed for nothing. I am writing about this to testify to the truth about what really happened in those days and bring it out in the open. Five days before the signing of the Framework Agreement, and one day before the Karpalak incident, all controversial issues regarding the Framework Agreement were already reconciled. It is my obligation to tell the historical truth about the innocent fighters who were killed outside of the areas of military action. In all the military operations in which our soldiers were involved, in all the actions that ARM undertook in every possible terrain, we lost only three fighters - all the others were killed in cowardly ways. If someone was planning to kill members of ARM for no reason then they could do it elsewhere, on public roads where army members traveled on a daily basis. Just like they did! It seems that someone needed to give an “example” of what was possible before the Agreement was signed. That “someone” will now have to carry the innocent victims on their conscience. Did that “someone” have a need to postpone or to accelerate the signing of the Framework Agreement? Only time will tell. I am certain about one thing however; Karpalak would not have

taken place if the Supreme Commander had ignored his “advisors” before the Agreement was signed. I can also tell you this; even now I am not clear on who ordered the August 6, 2001 withdrawal of the police from Karpalak and why the Ministry of Defense and General Headquarters were not informed about it. Obviously, someone did this on purpose! If we were to examine events that took place in a chronological order leading to “Karpalak” we would conclude that someone planned “Karpalak” for a specific purpose, like someone had planned Arachinovo; but the objective behind Arachinovo was already achieved: all ARM military actions were terminated and the problem began to be addressed by negotiations with direct participation of the international community. And with “Karpalak”, the aim may have been: either to delay the signing of the Ohrid Agreement, if the “architect” of this heinous crime was from the Macedonian bloc, or to speed up the signing of the Ohrid Agreement if the “architect” was not from the Macedonian bloc.

The Security Council meeting in Ohrid was scheduled for August 8, 2001.

After what happened in Karpalak on August 8, 2001, I firmly decided it was time for me to step down from my position as Chief of Staff of General Headquarters. It wanted to resign on August 6, 2001, during the meeting when the Council was demanding that the Minister of Defense resign, but then when a decision was reached the situation calmed down and the session on August 6, 2001 ended with a conclusion to start an operation in Erebinovo.

As a military man and as a citizen of the Republic of Macedonia, I was devastated when I found out that innocent people had been killed for nothing! Why did these young men have to die? More sinister, why did they have to die because someone decided to play political games during the military crisis? Even though I wrote August 8, 2001 in my notebook as the date of my resignation, I did not want to explain myself about why I had resigned, so I only wrote: “Because of all that took place I withdraw from my duties.” Of all the people that found out that I resigned, only Stoian Andov was sincere enough to go on television and publicly announce my resignation. But, as Andov made an attempt, he was immediately interrupted and did not get to say what he wanted to say.

After the heinous crimes were committed in Karpalak the entire situation could have easily gone out of control and developed into a full blown civil war.

This was a dishonest act and the worst thing about it was that in such dishonest acts the innocent tend to suffer; those who are least responsible for what had happened.

There are no winners in a civil war, only losers: on both sides - and if that were to happen here we would have had more involvement on the part of the international community with a much greater force, attempting to contain it, of that I was sure.

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REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA  
MINISTRY OF DEFENSE  
ARM GENERAL HEADQUARTERS  
2<sup>ND</sup> ARMY CORPS  
Str.dov.No. 30-182 / 21-1065  
August 8, 2001

Submitted Auxiliary Combat Report,

TO ARM General Headquarters Task Force

1. Pursuant to the Order of Command 2.AK str.dov. No. 30-182 / 21-973 of July 27, 2001, and amended by Order of command 2.AK str.dov.No. 30-182 / 21-1007 of July 31, 2001, in connection with the execution of the planned replacement of units involved in the composition of OTG-1, on August 8, 2001, transporting 2.pch-KOG Prilep/2.map from the barracks of Prilep through Veles - Skopje for Tetovo, departing at 07:00 hours. Unit 2.pch-KOG Prilep/2.map was mobilized on July 25, 2001.

2. The transport of people was performed with two buses from JSP "Pelagonia Trans" from Prilep, 1 m/v van, 1 m/v "Mercedes" and 1 m/v Hermelin from 2.bVP.



3. Around 09:25 hours, after the arrival of the column with m/v in Grupchin Region (Markov Dzhid) the same was ambushed by Albanian terrorists with hand grenade launchers, hand-held rocket launchers and automatic-firearm weapons.

4. During the attack:

a) The m/v Hermelin was hit in the rear left wheel but it continued to move towards Tetovo and arrived at the barracks.

b) The two buses were hit by gunfire wounding the following v/o:  
-PETRESKI Stanoia RUBINCHO, born in 1973 in Prilep (wounded in the back);  
-RISTESKI Kiril DIMCHE, born in 1971 in Prilep (wounded in the left forearm).

The injured were taken to the garrison clinic in Tetovo.

The buses continued to move towards Tetovo and arrived at the barracks.

c) The m/v “Mercedes” was hit with several mini-propelled grenades when it came within striking distance and the following were fatally shot:

1. Reservist Captain NAUMOSKI Giore NANE, born on January 29, 1953, married, father of two children, lived on the street “Kocho Ratsin” No. 5 in Prilep.

2. Reservist Lieutenant KITANOVSKI Blagoja SASHO, born on November 11, 1961, married, father of two children, lived on the street “Lenin” number 168 in Prilep.

3. V/o SEKULOVSKI Spase BRANKO, driver of m/v, born on November 26, 1958, lived on the street “Kei 4<sup>th</sup> of July” number 24-A in Prilep.

The remaining soldiers rushed out of the body of the m/v, took up combat positions and returned fire on the Albanian terrorists.

The following v/o died fighting:

4. V/o MIHOSKI Atanas GORAN, born on December 27, 1972 lived on the street "Beogradska" number 69-B in Prilep.

5. V/o DESPOTOSKI Blagoja MARKO, born on September 28, 1973, lived in the village Novoselani-Prilep.

The above mentioned persons' identification was confirmed by the Institute of Forensic Medicine at the Medical Faculty.

Identification for the remaining persons is pending. It is assumed that the following people were killed:

6. V/o SHABANOSKI Alia ERDOVAN, born on October 24, 1980, lived on the street "Dabnichki zavoi" number 34 in Prilep.

7. V/o STOJKOVSKI Giorgia MARJANCHO, born on April 20, 1968, lived on the street "Osogovska" number 52 in Prilep.

8. V/o GRUJOSKI Aleksandar LIUBE, born on November 3, 1969, had been living in the village Pashino Ruvtsi-Prilep.

9. V/o VELIANOVSKI Milorad DARKO, born on March 17, 1974, had been living in the village Ropotovo-Prilep.

10. V/o SEKULOSKI Vele PETSO, born September 25, 1970, lived in the village Pole-Prilep.

11. V/o RUSHITOSKI Kadri VEBI, born September 23, 1974, lived on the street "Vranjska" number 6 in Prilep.

So far ten bodies of the dead members of the unit were found and one member is now missing; he is neither among the dead nor in the unit barracks in Tetovo.

After completion of the identification, we will send you another report with the names of the remaining dead people.

d) The m/v van in which column commander Major Rashniki Ener was riding with two other officers, drove back about 200 metres from where they managed the skirmish.

5. We were notified about the Albanian terrorist attack on the column by Captain Chesko Eshef at 09:40 hours. The Captain was in the m/v - van. Immediately after that OG of ARM General Headquarters was informed and intervention of the Special Forces, helicopters and medical m/v was requested.

6. Around 10:30 hours the scene was secured by a special unit of the Army and the Army helicopters searched the ground at the scene.

7. The Public Prosecutor, an investigating judge from Court-1 - Skopje, BVP crime- technicians from Skopje and a medical team from CVZU - Skopje, arrived at the scene to assist and carry out inspections.

8. The commander of 2.AK Command engaged Colonel Zhivko Naidovski and Lieutenant Colonel Pavle Stavrevski to arrange the transfer of the bodies of the dead soldiers to the Institute of Forensic Medicine. Following the autopsy, using a funeral m/v vehicle from JP "Butel", the bodies of the dead will be transported from Skopje to the barracks in Prilep, and then engaging an AVL from 2.mal they will be transported from the barracks in Prilep to their places of residence.

9. An order was issued from 2.AK Command to organize funerals for the deceased military personnel in accordance with regulations and obligations as per all the Military Service Rule from point 595 to point 604.

10. A group of residents in Prilep has revolted because of this incident and because many of the dead were from Prilep. They have entered the barracks and have broken into one of the warehouses and took 55 AP 7.62 mm weapons and 500 rounds of ammunition.

Near the warehouse where they took the weapons, the same group of residents has taken the v/o that was demobilized on August 7, 2001 when the arms and ammunition was cleared.

To overcome the situation, in addition to engaging the garrison, command has also engaged two units from 2.BVP and the police from UVR Prilep.

In time the arms and ammunition were surrendered.

11. We will provide you with further details after we complete the identification of the deceased members of the unit and after we deliver the arms and ammunition.

MK/ DK

COMMANDER  
Brigadier General  
Ilija Nikolovski

Copy of the report issued by the Commander of 2.AK from General Headquarters about the “Karpalak” incident

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On August 9, 2001, the President paid a visit to the Ministry of Defense and then came to my office at General Headquarters.

The first thing he asked me was if I was okay and if I was serious about resigning. I said: “I am fine and yes I am serious about resigning. That is why I have invited all the unit commanders here so that I can explain to them the reasons for my resignation. It would be a good idea if you also stayed,” I replied to the President. He then asked: “Who do you propose will replace you?” I said: “If you don’t have anyone in mind or if you are not sure who should replace me, I recommend Major General Metodi Stamboliski but you should check with the Defense Minister first, he is in his office right now.” The President contacted the Minister and Vlado Buchkovski came into my office. I repeated what I had said to the President.

We went down to the “leather room” where the commanders were waiting for me. Included among them were the commanders of 1.AK, 2.AK, BB and PVO air defense, Skopje Defense Command and the generals of General Headquarters. After the President explained the purpose of the meeting, I took the floor and said: “As a moral human being I cannot stand at the head of General Headquarters when 10 innocent soldiers were murdered cowardly because of someone’s interest; I do not want anyone to manipulate me to achieve their narrow political interests. I do not want to provoke a civil war in the Republic of Macedonia and to be part of

someone's pre-planned scenario. I therefore resign from this function." After that a discussion followed. Some of the generals present confirmed my explanation with concrete examples from the field, i.e. who was essentially causing the provocations. General Zvonko Stojanovski, Commander of BB and PVO air defense, among other things, said: "At 09:30 hours on the day of the incident in Karpalak, a KFOR helicopter flew over the area. At 10:00 hours when our helicopters were heading for Karpalak we saw two NATO vehicles (two sports utility vehicles) fleeing the area. One vehicle managed to escape, while the other hid in Novo Selo..."

After that the President ordered Nikola Dimitrov to make a public announcement about my resignation, but for the reasons I stated; and to make sure that I was okay with it before it was released. Unfortunately Nikola Dimitrov was under pressure from someone else, so he wrote a statement and gave it to the public media without me having seen it or having agreed to it.

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Republic of Macedonia  
Office of the President

PRESS RELEASE  
For Information Purposes

The President of the Republic of Macedonia, Boris Trajkovski, today signed a decree that sacked the Chief of Staff of the Macedonian Army, General Pande Petrovski from office. President Trajkovski's immediate reason for this decision was because of yesterday's tragic incident in Karpalak where terrorist gangs had ambushed and attacked a military convoy killing ten reservist members of the Army of the Republic of Macedonia.

At yesterday's meeting of the Security Council, General Pande Petrovski emphasized his personal moral responsibility for the way the defenders were killed for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Macedonia, voicing his thoughts to resign from his function.

President Trajkovski thanked General Petrovski for his engagement in performing his duty in his office.

General Stamboliski, Deputy Chief of Staff of the Army of the Republic of Macedonia will temporarily perform the functions of Chief of Staff.

Skopje August 9, 2001

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT  
REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

The above is a copy of the announcement made to the media

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Even though I was too offended, I called the president and asked him if he had seen the statement Nikola Dimitrov gave to the public media. He said, and I believe he gave me an honest answer, that he had not seen it. "In that case, I said, since your Nikola did not do his job, tomorrow I will give my own statement to the media and I will not be attending the action plan meeting in Parliament; I will send General Metodi Stamboliski instead". He said: "Wait a minute!" and while he thought he had hung up the telephone with me, he picked up another handset and called Nikola Dimitrov. I could hear the President yelling at him saying: "Nikola, what did I tell you? I told you not to play games with General Pande Petrovski! I also told you to take the statement and let him have a look at it before you released it! I want you to go to A1 television this evening and tell the truth!" No matter what, I think the President was a sincere and honest man and wanted to calm the situation in Macedonia. Unfortunately his motives were not always properly understood. There were too many obstacles put in front of him. That he knew and had good information about what was happening on the ground and beyond. They were intimidating him and threatening to liquidate him and with other malicious acts, but he persevered in his own idea for resolving the crisis.

And with that I decided to go public and reveal the reasons of my resignation on my own. On August 10, 2001 I held a press release.

The only responder to my statement delivered over the media was Prime Minister Georgievski. He thought that I was going to be publicly uncovering names and giving out facts, i.e. revealing the truth about the military crisis and that it was purposely concocted and strictly controlled by specific instruments. But he was wrong. I had no intention of continuing to debate that subject publicly, over the media, knowing full well that it would only complicate matters and make the final solution even more difficult to achieve. I had no intention, after the fact, to start a military or least of all, a political career.

Being familiar with the whole situation Major General Stamboliski had reservations about replacing me and refused to accept the office of Chief of Staff of General Headquarters and so I was again asked to stay on and help in resolving the crisis. I decided to stay in that position until August 29, 2001. After that, by Presidential Decree (no. 40 as of August 29, 2001), I was appointed advisor to the Minister of Defense for the development and use of ARM.

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GENERAL  
PANDE PETROVSKI  
August 9, 2001  
Skopje

Press Release

Several days after thinking about it, and after informing the Security Council at our August 8, 2001 meeting, and after meeting with the President and Commander in Chief of our armed forces, today, August 9, 2001, I decided to resign from my duty as Chief of Staff of ARM General Headquarters.

During the specified session of the Council I clearly and precisely expressed my unambiguous view that, as a man and as a military officer, with moral principles, I cannot stand at the head of General Headquarters and lead the Army of the Republic of Macedonia after

the killing of 2 officers and 8 soldiers from the army reserve who have lost their lives because of someone's interest; whose main goal is to prevent the Ohrid political Agreement from being implemented.

Like I have done many times before, during this session I pointed out that I don't want and will not allow whoever it may be to manipulate me personally or my function in order to realize narrow party or political interests, especially not while I am performing military operations. At the same time I have made it clear to the members of the Council that the tasks they want to lay on the Army, and how they should be implemented, will lead to a civil war in the country, which will have no winners, and we all together - we the citizens of this country will be the losers. At the same time let me remind you that in the end, eventually, we will have to sit at a round table and we will have to come to a political agreement.

This, I would like to especially emphasize by stating that people live in the regions in which the Albanian gangs and terrorists now operate. However, above all, these are citizens of the Republic of Macedonia. Therefore, I have stressed that I do not want and will not accept any pressure put on me to pursue certain political party aims, which essentially are against the interests of our citizens and the Republic of Macedonia.

In my long life and military experience I have always put the interests of my country, as a whole, first. It has been my main goal to be ready and always work in favour of my country, and that will remain so even after my departure from my current position and function.

General  
Pande Petrovski

The above is a copy of the press release issued by General Pande Petrovski

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The proposed operation for August 6, 2001, which was approved by the President and called for relocating our units to Erebrino in readiness should there be a need to engage them in freeing the Poroj - Iazhintse road, was executed later. From that aspect, on August 9, 2001 the units arrived and occupied their designated positions. On August 9, 2001 during the time the President was in General Headquarters, after we met with the commanders, he, I, Major General Metodi Stamboliski and Minister Vlado Buchkovski went to my office and agreed to perform scaled down actions to satisfy flaring passions. We agreed to perform the actions on August 9 and 10, 2001, at a place where a group of terrorists was stationed in the barracks just in front of Poroj. The action was successfully executed. After that something different started taking place; innocent Macedonian citizens were being kidnapped.

In those days the situation on the ground had become more and more difficult to control, especially at positions where the newly formed "Lions" units were stationed. The so-called NLA did not have the capacity or the ability to perform serious action against our positions. So, for some of the uncontrolled acts we performed against them, they took revenge by inflicting losses on us by other means; they attacked the roads where we were not present. These occurrences and terrorist acts were difficult to prevent especially in settlements where Albanians lived. I always emphasized that and insisted on doing only what was possible without causing casualties and property damage. That is why it was also important to secure empty and damaged buildings, etc.

Up to August 13, 2001, up to the day the Framework Agreement was signed, there were several instances when the situation could have gone out of control. We were engaged in monitoring the situation twenty-four hours a day so that there were no surprises.

On August 9, 2001, at 20:00 hours, General Risto Galevski came over to inform us that "a large number of terrorists were moving from Kosovo into our territory and were aiming to occupy Radusha". He was asking us to send the army to defend Radusha. So I said to General Metodi Stamboliski: "This again is some kind of trap." Because the day before the Interior Ministry had ordered their police force to withdraw from that region, i.e. to leave the village

and take a new position 2 km south and leave only a few police officers in the police station.

Radusha had been under full police control since March 29, 2001, when we carried out a military operation over the entire area. The space from Radusha along the Kosovo border to Iazhintse was not populated. The road Dvortse - Iazhintse was also under our control. But because the Kosovo - Macedonia border was a long stretch in the direction Krivets - Gracheni - Kuchkovo, we had it strongly reinforced with our security forces. North of Radusha, on the Kosovo border, there was a camp since UMPROFOR was in the Republic of Macedonia. This camp was occupied by a platoon of border guards and armoured vehicles that patrolled the entire area up to the Iazhintse guardhouse. If any terrorists showed up in that region after March 29, 2001 measures were taken to stop them. It was difficult for terrorist groups to get through because there were no settlements nearby for them to hide and the group was quickly broken up or retreated back to Krivenik in Kosovo.

Suddenly, before the signing of the Framework Agreement, the whole area became ripe for wider action against terrorist groups that had infiltrated the Republic of Macedonia from Kosovo. We knew that the so-called NLA had a training camp with recruits near Krivenik (in Kosovo, 1 km away from the Macedonian border). That particular area was inside Kosovo and the KFOR "South" brigade from the Czech Republic was responsible for it. The only suitable route for infiltration from Kosovo to Macedonia, in that entire space, was the River Radusha. This space was well-guarded by ARM and anyone attempting to enter Macedonia would have had to pass through ARM's camp. But in spite of all that, in May and June 2001 ARM strengthened its units in Chashka with tanks, artillery and armoured personnel carriers. In total, ARM had enough forces in this region, including those that reinforced Rasche, equivalent to a full battalion. Given its current condition the so-called NLA had no chance of attacking from Kosovo, in a classical sense, by the forces that left Krivenik towards Chashka and Radusha which were acting in the territory of Kosovo. On several occasions I had mentioned to the KFOR commander that I was aware of the fact that a training camp, belonging to the so-called NLA, existed in Krivenik.

When we were informed by General Risto Galevski that “there were many terrorists in Radusha coming from Kosovo and that they were preparing to take Radusha”, and that we were asked to send our troops to defend Radusha, I began to worry, unaware that the police force had been withdrawn from that village.

Immediately after this we ordered a column of tanks and other military resources to start rolling out of Skopje to strengthen the border camp because in a situation such as this, with the police abandoning them, a surprise was possible.

It was crucial to save the Radusha camp from completely being destroyed by the terrorists who could then launch an attack from the Kosovo side and at the same time launch another from the village Radusha. I don't know why, but before the attack the police withdraw completely and left our troops alone in the camp to lead a five hour battle, until ARM reinforcements arrived.

Provoked by these kinds of attacks and infiltration from Kosovo, a strong counter attack from the distance was carried out in the entire region in the next two days. The media, on the other hand, attributed this defense to the police. The thesis circulating was that: “In this region it was the police that defended the Republic of Macedonia.” But in fact the police had abandoned its post even before the hostilities began.

After the withdrawal of the police and after the 5 hour battle and withdrawal of our troops from Camp Radusha, the entire Radusha and Iazhintse space became a “Mecca” for the terrorists. After August 12, 2001 they were free to communicate with Kosovo and Radusha about Krivenik even though KFOR forces were on the other side of them.

Even though the group of our soldiers, who defended Radusha Camp, experienced a vicious attack from all sides, especially from the Kosovo side, they absorbed the attack, defended the camp and showed high professionalism, courage and perseverance. We from General Headquarters were in direct contact with them at all times and kept them active until the reinforcements arrived and pulled them out with no losses. The terrorist attack took place during the

dark of night because the terrorists knew they could not have stopped the attack if it had begun during the day on August 11, 2001. No one could have stopped ARM from performing acts against the terrorists even before they arrived... even on the other side of the Kosovo border.

The days before August 13, 2001 (before the Framework Agreement was signed) large scale provocations were expected at all times. Since the President had decided not to sign the Tetovo operation, Radusha was invented. The Ministry of the Interior had 100 Special Forces police officers in the Radusha police station. ARM had 24 soldiers in Radusha Camp who managed to hold their own.

During the course of the military operations, during the night when the worst attacks were carried out against our troops in the camp, I tried to contact the KFOR Commander but he did not respond so I left him a message. I said: "If the attack from the Kosovo side continues and if mortars continue to be fired, I will be forced to open fire and execute an attack and I will not be responsible for any KFOR units that may get in the way." After that phone call I contacted President Trajkovski and told him what I said. Shortly afterwards, around 00:01 hours on August 11, 2001, the terrorists stopped their actions and we were able to extract our soldiers from the camp. In the night during the attack, one of our tanks that was engaged in the Krivenichka River became disabled. It was left in the river. Later the terrorists dragged it out and used it as a trophy, claiming that they had captured it from ARM.

## LIUBOTEN

After “Karpalak”, the road Poroi - Iazhintse and “Radusha”, which received attention for only a very short time, i.e. from August 8 to August 11, 2001, culmination on the terrain went out of general control. Government members from the wide coalition openly came into direct conflict with each other because each was looking for reasons to start a confrontation with the others and accuse them for the situation we were in. I remember attending a meeting in Ohrid where they demanded that Vlado Buchkovski resign and Branko Tsrvenkovski take his place. At the same meeting I also remember Prime Minister Georgievski saying: “All this that has happened is too naïve - it is a tragedy for the Macedonian people - it will be a shameful decision to sign this agreement. The Republic of Macedonia has entered a dead end; the state agencies have no authority over the people.” I wrote this down on August 8, 2001. But, even after what was said and done, the Agreement was still signed and it was signed with the same coalition partner who was in government when the military crisis in Macedonia began. These words of wisdom needed to have been said, this problem was in need of correction and acted upon when it began, instead of on August 8, 2001 when it was too late and after the international institutions became fully involved in resolving the crisis. If this resolution, at this late period of time, was not accepted, I believe we would have been faced with a civil war, it was inevitable. Obviously someone did not want that, and despite all of the provocations that took place at the time, i.e. at the beginning and during the Ohrid negotiations, nothing major took place but a culmination was indeed reached the day before the signing of the Agreement and manifested itself as an incident in Liuboten.

On August 12, 2001, a Sunday, as I always did, this time too I was asleep in the office of General Headquarters. At 06:00 hours I was awakened by sounds of explosions coming from the “Ilinden” Barracks. I thought something had happened in the barracks and immediately called Colonel Blazho Kopachev, Commander of the barracks and asked: “Blazho, what is happening in the barracks?” He quickly replied: “Nothing!” I then asked: “Do you not hear artillery fire?!” He again gave me a short answer: “I hear it but it’s only an echo coming from Radishani.” So I said: “Go right now and

check it out then call me back immediately!” I contacted General Stamboliski and asked: “Do you know who is firing artillery? These are strong explosions; I do not believe these are terrorist attacks...” In the meantime Colonel Blazho Kopachev called me back and said: “The explosions are coming from Liuboten, the police have attacked the village, but we don’t know anything about that!” I snapped back at him and said: “How could you not know, this is your artillery firing, the police have no artillery! Go and immediately find out what’s going on and let me know!” I then again contacted General Stamboliski and asked: “What is happening? Who ordered the attack without informing me or the Brigade Commander?!” He said: “I don’t know, I will check!” “Inform the Minister of Defense!”

The artillery fire ended around 07:00 hours. Commander Colonel Blazho Kopachev called me back again and told me that our 120 mm mortar battery was sent to support the police attack as ordered by the Supreme Commander.” I snapped at him again and said: “Stop talking! How did the Supreme Commander know where you have 120 mm batteries in those positions? And with what did he issue this order and to which commander? I don’t even know who the battery commander is, how did he know that? Go directly to the site, check the situation, take a statement from the battery commander and come back here to General Headquarters with that statement!”

I informed Minister Vlado Buchkovski about all this, about which he was not familiar.

When Colonel Blazho Kopachev returned to General Headquarters he gave me the battery commander’s statement. I read it but I could not believe it. Among other things, the statement read: “At 06:00 the President called me on my mobile telephone and ordered me to provide support to the police attack on the village Liuboten - but not to act inside the village, only from the outside...”

I looked at the Colonel and said: “This cannot be disputed, the Supreme Commander has the right to directly issue orders. This is spelled out in the rules of service; that in an emergency situation he can issue orders to any rank, the system of command can issue direct orders to subordinates if an order is to be immediately carried out,

but there is also a rule that a subordinate must immediately notify his immediate superior of the order received and from whom!” Colonel Blazo Kopachev looked at me and said: “I am aware of that Sir, but sometimes things do happen...” which in fact was right.

It was unusual for the President not to have consulted with us and not to have asked us for our opinions, especially when a combat task was jointly carried out between ARM and the police.

Again however, I thought to myself that this must be another one of those games Liube Boskovski, the Minister of the Interior Ministry, was playing. I contacted Boskovski and he said: “I don’t know when the attack started. The President called me around 08:00 hours but at that time I was at the “Erodrom” neighbourhood getting a haircut.” I no longer knew who to believe... The battery commander was very clear in his written statement; only 12 rounds of mortars were fired from the battery and ARM was not involved in the actual attack. Later we received information that “allegedly the police also did not directly participate in the attack and that a security agency called “Comet” was responsible. The information was not verified and neither was the reason why the Army was not in charge.

I just want to emphasize here that this was another “attempt” by someone to drag ARM into “chaos”.

Thanks to the sound minds of “some” of the people in our government and for the assistance provided by the international community, “chaos” in the Republic of Macedonia was prevented and so was a civil war in which, I am sure, in such a situation, NATO would have unleashed its units and “separated” our country into two pieces. And I wouldn’t rule out that our neighbouring countries would have become involved. If it came to this, then I wouldn’t even rule out an inevitable regional war, whose consequences would have been difficult to predict, especially for the Macedonian people.

The “architect” of the military crisis in Macedonia achieved his objectives without a total war (civil war) because he had already developed tools to control the military crisis on both sides. All other “things said and done” were only part of the end game and forgotten

as time passed on. The dilemma as to whether there were winners or losers in this military crisis: there were winners and those winners were the politicians, the rest of us were just tools with which they achieved the planned objectives in this war.

In all that time the biggest losers were the Macedonian people and the Macedonian army which was humiliated in this historical period, humiliated by its own “patriots”. How long will our people have to endure this inside our own country, I don’t know. But I am always hoping that the end of this humiliation is near!?

The Macedonian people participated in many wars, but never with their own army and with their own goals - they always fought for foreign interests. The 2001 war will no doubt be recorded by history, if for nothing else then for the fact that the Republic of Macedonia, as an independent sovereign state, with its own army, defended its own territorial integrity and wholeness.



## **DISARMING THE SO-CALLED “NLA”**

On August 15, 2001, as I said earlier, the Government decided to stop all military actions, on both sides, and after that to start the disarmament. Of course, this was to be done after the Ohrid Agreement was signed.

At that moment I remembered the letter from Peter Faith in which he clearly said: “As a confidence building measure you are required to stop all air-military actions during the operation, with the exception of those made for regular logistics needs of the security forces of the Republic of Macedonia and emergency evacuations, to be carried out in coordination with the “Harvest” Task Force commander. Furthermore, you are required to withdraw all heavy weapons and garrison extra forces during the collection of weapons from the ethnic Albanian armed groups, taking into account security forces that will be required for the protection of the Republic of Macedonia.”

All these requirements, especially the withdrawal of troops with heavy weapons (tanks, artillery), were met: The entire cache of weapons from the crisis regions was withdrawn and taken back to the barracks.

In addition to having to withdraw our heavy weapons from the crisis regions, we had to also pull out our T-72 tank battalion. We had purchased these tanks from the Ukraine. They were manned by a professional crew and were capable of serious action. They were stationed in the “Ilinden” barracks in Skopje. We had no written agreement for this withdrawal, no discussions about it during the ceasefire negotiations and not a mention about it later, during the disarming of the so-called NLA.

The NATO Secretary General was particularly interested in this battalion and he wanted it stationed as far away from the crisis zone as possible. Knowing the unit’s potential for combat, NATO demanded that the battalion be stationed in Strumitsa. With the daily pressures put on the President of the Republic of Macedonia by NATO, the entire tank battalion, including its officers and crew composition, was ordered to deploy in Strumitsa which, of course,

was done. After that, every time, even if a single tank had to leave Strumitsa it had to seek permission from NATO.

I believe, by some means, we were played while the negotiations for disarming the so-called NLA were going on. Namely, during the drafting of the disarming Agreement and the manner in which it was to be executed, the NATO “Harvest” Task Force, from the beginning of the talks, had agreed to: allow the presence of ARM and Interior Ministry officers at each disarming point to act as observers while dressed in civilian clothes. This was a requirement at the opening of the negotiations because we had learned that the so-called NLA was armed with various weapons that came from some of the countries which were members of NATO. But, before the implementation of “Harvest” began, under the excuse that “we cannot guarantee security for our observers”, we were not allowed to enter the gates where the weapons were collected. Our observers were turned back by the NATO Task Force.

Even after the Agreement was signed and even after the Government of the Republic of Macedonia approved the stationing of Task Force “Harvest” in Macedonia and even after the plan for disarming the so-called NLA was developed, the situation did not improve. There were serious incidents taking place in the crisis areas, especially in Tetovo Region.

#### SECURITY SITUATION IN THE VILLAGE PATAE REGION - AUGUST 21, 2001

To ARM General Headquarters, personally to General Pande Petrovski  
(Photocopy of the report from the Commander)

The report, sent by the Commander of the Operational-tactical group - 1, Brigadier General Josip Boshevski, among other things, said:

“Gunfire from an armed group in the area of the village Ratae, outside of the control of the Interior Ministry and the composition of the anti-terrorist combat units, was heard during the evening hours on August 19, 2001. A tank unit, under the command of Major Trajkovski, acted at the mosque in the village Neproshteno. I believe

today's blasting of the monastery in the village Leshok was a terrorist reaction as a sign of retaliation.”

“On behalf of OTG-1 and personally on my behalf, you have been informed and repeatedly made aware to take immediate measures to cease actions by the above mentioned units because they were not in danger at that point, and thus need to be handled. Also, I would like to inform you that an armed group of police officers is stationed in the village Ratae which operationally is not under the Tetovo control and command, and that it often opens fire without need and can cause serious consequences for the implementation of the Peace Agreement...”

“On August 21, 2001 I personally sent one of our officers with a NATO mission in the area of the village Ratae, and it was determined that the armed group, according to the mission representatives, was concerned about rumours being spread “that every NATO mission will be killed.”

“To the question posed to the officer from OTG - 1 Command who leads this group and whose orders were executed by a person named Marian who did not want to give his surname, said that he and the band follow the General's orders, and there is no account of someone else managing and commanding them.”

“From the parties with ‘red berets’ a high degree of loathing is manifested for the NATO mission expressed through expressing the threat: ‘You will see what will happen in two days’...”

General Headquarters and the Ministry of Defense, in those days, almost everyday, received these kinds of reports, especially from the NATO mission, pointing out that in this area there were some units that were outside of any control and that they could cause serious consequences for the implementation of the whole “Harvest” operation and for the implementation of the Framework Agreement. It also has been reported that the behaviour and actions of these “red berets”, have caused Macedonian residents to flee their villages several times. Of course the President and the Prime Minister of the Republic Macedonia have been informed about this.

This naturally was creating uncertainty in the events and future of the implementation of the Agreement and in the stabilization of the country.

Today (August 2006) all those events, immediately before the Ohrid Agreement and after its signing, look to me like feeble attempts by some structures to continue the crisis and confusion in the Republic of Macedonia. Attempts which no doubt must still be investigated and clarified. Fortunately nothing happened to aid these structures. I deeply believe that ARM significantly contributed to stabilize the situation - with its officers and soldiers and with their responsible behaviour throughout the crisis.

## SUMMARY

Since the beginning of the war, there were varying opinions and disunity in the top government officials in the Republic of Macedonia as to how the war was going to be resolved. There were impressions left, especially in the public that the leadership of the country was undecided about using the existing defense system, according to the Constitution, which called for using all means possible in the defense of the sovereignty and integrity of the state. This indecision, based on whether or not there was lack of courage, know-how, or if “purposely perpetrated” is not important. What is very important is to examine whether or not the government authorities took appropriate measures, as they were obligated to do by law, to defend the Republic of Macedonia. If they did not, then they aided the terrorists and are their direct accomplices.

These kinds of indecisions, for not taking legitimate measures, early in the war, were justified because allegedly there was a lack of information. The parties responsible for taking action were claiming they did not know “what was happening in the Republic of Macedonia?” Later, as it turned out, there was such information available. It was generated by ARM, by the Army border units which were reporting that they were being attacked on the territory of the Republic of Macedonia by foreign military forces, which the public and top government officials chose to call “border incidents”.

However, under public pressure, especially from the media, since this problem was raised to the international scene, i.e. because the Republic of Macedonia was a legitimate and sovereign state and had the right to use legal means to defend itself, to use all its defense capabilities, the state leadership has decided to take serious military action.

In the beginning, when we initiated the first military operations, the top state leadership again came into flux, i.e. it split into two factions; one faction was calling for radical military action against the aggressor and other faction was calling for the military crisis be resolved by political means - “the politicians caused it and therefore the politicians should resolve it.”

When the view prevailed that the Republic of Macedonia had a legitimate right to defend itself with its own security forces by undertaking military actions, the leadership initiated an operation in Tetovo Region. Unfortunately this operation was cut short. Three days later the security forces were ordered to stop all actions – instead of allowing it to finish the job and break the agents of war, ARM was ordered to stop and was placed in a static state. Why did this happen? It was our right to defend our country and yet “someone” chose to stop us. The question here is why and was this based on some kind of pre-arranged agreement. Someone will need to explain why this happened or we will have to conclude, and rightly so, that the military crisis had previously been agreed upon by external factors who had dealings with some of the political structures that were then in power in our country.

At the very beginning, when ARM and the police had the capability, determination and courage to cope and overcome this military crisis, “someone” was afraid that the aim for starting this military crisis would not be achieved if the crisis ended prematurely. That “someone” had previously developed tools to control the crisis and was happy to see it continue. Whoever did this certainly had the “tools” to further the course of the war by military means until it reached its climax with the direct involvement of NATO stopping the war and sitting everyone down at the negotiating table.

The people that caused the aggression did not sit at the negotiating table. In fact it was “others” who sat on the other side of the table representing the interests of the aggressor, and as such the purpose of the crisis was certainly realized and, I would dare to say, revealed.

The moment these “others” became unsure of whether they would achieve the aggressor’s ultimate goal before signing the agreement, was the moment when they caused unnecessary casualties outside of the zone of military action to “persuade” the Macedonian people that “there was no other solution but to sign the Ohrid Framework Agreement”. Undeniable is the fact that all these perpetrators who were involved were part of the state leadership. Whether this was done intentionally or for any other reason is not important, without the involvement of someone in the Macedonian state leadership the

“architect” who had planned this crisis would not have been able to realize his objectives.

The motives and objectives of those who worked on behalf of those who wanted “to divide the Republic of Macedonia” are inexplicable. It is a mystery why, instead of peacefully leading the Macedonian people, they had such a desire to cause chaos in their own country. At the beginning of the crisis resolution, of course, when they worked under the thesis of dividing the Republic of Macedonia, they could have only done that by using the security forces and military means.

When they were applying the tools to create the military crisis, the instrument of intimidation most used by the state leadership was the so-called “friendly intelligence services.” These so-called “friendly intelligence services” were systematically delivering “information”, by which, among other things, the number of terrorists estimated to be inside the Republic of Macedonia was 50,000. This caused the Macedonian top state leadership to hesitate in resolving the crisis by military means.

Culmination of this intimidation from the so-called “friendly intelligence services” was reached on the day the Ohrid Framework Agreement was signed, i.e. the day before that the following information was released (which I will quote in full because on August 13, 2001 the so-called NLA “planned an operation to take over Sarai.”):

“The attack was planned on the object called Veternik in the woods near the village Gorno Svilare, where units of the so-called NLA were deployed with strength of about 300 to 400 members armed with automatic rifles, 12.7mm caliber machine guns, and most certainly 82 mm mortars. The commander of this unit was Nuredin Azbi, owner of the restaurant ‘Lozana’ in Porta Vlae (Skopje), commander of the lower units was his brother Ramadan, the famous Odzha Sulio (i.e. little Sulio) from Gorno Svilare and his son. The aim of this unit was to launch an attack in the direction: Dolno Svilare - Kondovo - Sarai and to take Sarai. An additional task for this unit was to launch an attack on the village Rashche, and to assist the so-called NLA unit located inside the village Dvorche near

Radusha. The terrorist unit of the so-called ANA numbered about 600 members armed with 82 mm and 120 mm mortars. Commander of this unit was Alit, from Dolno Svilare, who had completed military training in Peshkopeia, Albania.”

The attack on Sarai was scheduled to start on August 13, 2001 and end the same day or on the next day, Monday August 14, 2001.

The record shown that the so-called NLA did not perform, not even a single operation, in the past seven months, except for the ambushes and shameful murders they committed outside the zones of military action. While ARM, for months, continued to provoke them to come out and fight, they hid among the civilian population, that is, until August 13, 2001 when they, as we are told, “were planning an operation to seize Sarai”. Where did this information, or I should say, misinformation come from? Who was in most need for this kind of “misinformation”? Was this incentive for those who were hesitating to sign the Ohrid Framework Agreement? Or was it something else? There were many so-called “intelligence reports” like this one, but this one, quoted above, was particularly suspicious because it was delivered the day before the signing of the Ohrid Framework Agreement.

Our services were well aware of the condition in which the so-called NLA had found itself, but in spite of our efforts to inform them, right from the start, “someone” tried to mislead the people with frightening misinformation.

The so-called NLA was never independent right from the start. It belonged to the UCMPB formation and composition until this organization was dissolved on May 25, 2001 by KFOR, when Yugoslav units entered the Bujanovac - Presevo border area. Until then UCMPB and the KLA were part of one command led by Emrush Dzhemail.

The NLA leadership had planned to enter northern Macedonia in case of a military escalation in southern Serbia; in case the Yugoslav army entered Sector “B” after May 24, 2001. As we have shown, some of those forces, about 170 to 200 fighters, did enter the Republic of Macedonia as part of the so-called NLA. After that,



with the dissolution of UCMPB by KFOR, the so-called NLA received apparent independence. Then, on May 25, 2001 the NLA became KFOR's pet with its own General Headquarters located in Prizren, Kosovo. G'zimi Ostreni was appointed Commander and Ali Ahmeti - "Abas", political director. Their formations had a so-called Division with a brigade called "Tanushevtsi" and another one called "Tetovo".

NATO - KFOR's assessment of the so-called NLA:

"The NLA ranks were composed of Macedonian Albanians from northwestern Macedonia and Kosovo. They were experienced fighters. There was no evidence of the presence of fighters from Albania."

"The NLA had the ability to recruit fighters in the Republic of Macedonia, in Kosovo and in the Diaspora. It is estimated that 150 former members of UCMPB joined the NLA..."

"The NLA had the ability to continue with low level insurgencies indefinitely, but would have had difficulty carrying out larger operations..."

"The NLA was forced to limit or stop its activities until it was sufficiently re-equipped..."

Before Arachinovo the situation of the so-called NLA was critical. The terrorist group was falling apart and thus we were forced to sign a ceasefire Agreement. The following is an official NLA report on the state that the NLA was in at that time:

"In the meantime the 112<sup>th</sup> Brigade Mudzhdin Aliu, with 300 people based near Tetovo, appears to be suffering from low morale, a problem which undoubtedly contributed to its inability to independently provoke or engage the Macedonian forces..." "The soldiers of the 112<sup>th</sup> Brigade have become dissatisfied with life on the ground, and from the middle of June 2001 have been preparing to riot or leave the unit altogether. The command of the so-called NLA has stubbornly failed to acknowledge the problem and see to the wishes of its members and has regularly misled them to stay the

course...” “The dissatisfaction in 112 Brigade, together with how the so-called NLA leadership has responded to it, highlights the extent to which the NLA’s commitment and strength has fluctuated in such a short period of time...”

This is how the so-called NLA stood before Arachinovo. Our state leadership accepted a ceasefire from a foe that was falling apart and then pursued a course to solve the crisis by political means because, in its mind and without confirming this with its military leadership, it assumed “ARM was unable to resolve the crisis by military means!?” Surely, at least part of the state leadership must have consciously known that this was wrong?!

The state leadership, i.e. the Government of the Republic of Macedonia was outsmarted to sign an unconditional ceasefire Agreement. Was this because it wanted to be intentionally outsmarted or because of incompetence or from ignorance, which I doubt, I don’t know. Even a greater mistake in its part, was to allow conditions to be set by Peter Faith, personal envoy to the NATO Secretary General, about whom we wrote earlier in this book.

What happened during the ceasefire and how many innocent people fell victim to the cowardly ways of the terrorists has also been highlighted in this book. Who was in need, after the ceasefire in the Republic of Macedonia, to start a general chaos in order to provoke a civil war for which there could be no military solution; which then would be solved only by political means and through the international community. All this needs to be well investigated. The tragic events that took place after the ceasefire were enacted by those who started the military crisis to justify to the people that indeed the crisis was real. But, as it turned out, good fortune favoured the Macedonian people and a civil war was avoided. Tragically too many innocent and honest people, including the brave Macedonian fighters, had to die by the treacherous and cowardly ways of the terrorists, in order to place blame elsewhere for what had happened in the Republic of Macedonia?! Who is better equipped to understand this than the elected government officials! The rest of us who were directly involved in the resolution of the crisis had honest, patriotic and professional intentions to defend the Republic of Macedonia from this aggressor. We were all sadly, at

every turn, hampered in every military operation we conducted and not by the enemy, but by our own top leadership. We led the war by all the means and strength that ARM possessed in peacetime, in a peaceful situation. From that aspect, in those days and today the participants of this war, particularly those who gave their lives and those who were left permanently maimed, cannot answer these questions but definitely need them to be answered. Someone from the then government was talking about declaring a war situation in the Republic of Macedonia but never bothered to take the necessary measures to equip the security forces to deal with a crisis situation, not even in a small part of the Macedonian territory.

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Subject: Announcements regarding the attack on Sarai

A so-called NLA unit has been deployed at the object called Veternik in the woods near the village of Gorno Svilare which, according to our source, numbers about 300 to 400 terrorists armed with AP, PM 12.7 mm caliber and probably has 82 mm mortars (the source does not rule out this possibility).

The commander of this unit was Nuredin Azbi, owner of the restaurant 'Lozana' in Porta Vlae. Commander of the lower units was his brother Ramadan, the famous Odzha Sulio (i.e. little Sulio from Gorno Svilare, former president of the Islamic Religious Community) and his son.

The aim of this unit was to launch an attack in the direction: Dolno Svilare - Kondovo - Sarai and to take Sarai. An additional task for this unit was to launch an attack on the village Rashche and to assist the so-called NLA unit located inside the village Dvorche near Radusha. The terrorist unit of the so-called ANA numbered about 600 members armed with 82 mm and 120 mm mortars. Commander of this unit was Alit, from Dolno Svilare, who had completed military training in Peshkopeia, Albania.”

The attack on Sarai was scheduled to start on August 13, 2001 and end the same day or on the next day, Monday August 14, 2001.

According to our source, there were 80 young people from the village Dolno Svilare in the so-called NLA unit stationed in the Veternik forest and an even larger number of young people from the village Gorno Svilare. These people received a daily ration of 30 gm of food and drink. The injured and wounded are taken to the Gorno Slivare Clinic where they are looked after by Fani, from the village Rashche, who serves as their doctor.

Despite the fierce hostilities in the village Boiane, our source said that the so-called NLA units that are fighting in that region have not abandoned their positions.

The houses in the village Rashche that are not loyal to the NLA have been characteristically marked. These houses have been marked with a cloth and a small bar of soap which, according to our source, means that members of the house who cooperate with the Macedonian security forces will be liquidated.

Supplement: NLA units are stationed in the villages Gorno and Dolno Svilare, Kopanitsa, Dvorche and other places of action.

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## **AUTHOR'S SHORT BIOGRAPHY**

General Pande Petrovski was born on December 26, 1943 in the village Zhivoino, in Bitola Region. He was a native of a village family. His grandfather Petre was a participant in the Ilinden Uprising and the First World War. His father Alekso participated in NOB (National Liberation Army) from 1943 and was twice wounded. After finishing high school in 1962, Pande enrolled at the Military Academy in Belgrade, and in 1965 graduated with honours. Immediately after finishing school he was appointed Second Lieutenant in the Armoured Mechanized units.

Pande started his military career as a second lieutenant in the Fourth Armoured Brigade in Iastrebarsko, near Zagreb, where he performed his duties first as a platoon commander, then as a commander of a regiment, and then as deputy commander of a battalion and eventually as commander of an armoured battalion. In the meantime, for a period of one year, he completed his armoured mechanized unit training in the OMI Centre in Banja Luka. In 1974 he attended the Higher Military Academy for land forces in Belgrade.

After Pande completed his studies in Belgrade, in 1976 he was appointed Chief of Operations and training of the armoured regiment garrisoned in Prilep. In 1980 he was given command of the garrison in Veles and made Chief of Staff of the 212<sup>th</sup> Mechanized Brigade. In 1985 he was sent back to school to upgrade his skills at the School of National Defense in Belgrade (VA - KoV). After completing his training there, in 1986 he was appointed Commander of the 15<sup>th</sup> Mechanized Brigade in Prishtina.

In 1990 Pande was appointed assistant to the commander of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Army District in Skopje where he was affected by the dissolution of the Yugoslav National Army. After the dissolution, in March 1992, he was appointed Commander of the Second Army Corps in Bitola, which he formed in the composition of the Army of the Republic of Macedonia.

In 1996 he was appointed commander of military readiness for ARM in Skopje, and in 1999, in addition to those duties, he also performed the duty of Deputy Chief of Staff at General

Headquarters. In 2000 he was prematurely retired by order of the President of the Republic Macedonia. In March 2001 Pande was reactivated and appointed Deputy Chief of Staff of General Headquarters. In June of 2001 he was appointed Chief of Staff of General Headquarters. In September 2001 he was appointed Adviser for the Promotion and Utilization of ARM. In 2002 Pande again retired but continued to work as an Adviser for the Promotion and Utilization of ARM at the Ministry of Defense. In his early career in the military, Pande progressed up the ranks from captain first class, to Major, to Colonel. In 1993 Pande was promoted to Major General and Corps Commander, and in 1997 he was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant General, and in 2001 he was promoted to the rank of Chief of Staff of General Headquarters.

## **EXCERPT FROM THE BOOK REVIEW - TESTIMONIES 2001**

By Professor Dr. Vlado Popovski

The notes provided by General Pande Petrovski about the events that took place in the Republic of Macedonia, during the time when he was Commander of military operations, fighting against the so-called NLA, are an original source of meaningful testimony of the more significant aspects of the 2001 crisis and conflict. His labour represents a necessary part of the mosaic of these events. In it one can clearly see the roles and positions of the respective actors in the crisis, without which it would be very difficult or impossible to see what actually happened in 2001, what kind of a war it was and what its purpose was. Because of the fact that General Pande Petrovski was one of the key figures in the events in 2001, his notes, observations and testimonies are key parts of the documentation of those events.

The text itself in this valuable book: the General's own statements about the 2001 events and the parts relating to the military aspects are presented concisely, chronologically and meticulously. The author has produced something unexpected from such a position in these events. This is a very important text because of the notes and first hand testimony offered, without which it would be very complex and almost impossible to analyze the many important events that took place in 2001 in the development of the Republic of Macedonia.

Through the General's position and role in the 2001 war, the roles or parts of the roles of other individuals become visible, including those of the most responsible people in the state leadership, which makes this book a very valuable piece of information in regards to the politics led during the peak of the armed conflict and their effects relative to our fundamental state interests. It is of course understandable that in this aspect nothing has been exhausted and the most significant part of the top state leadership's role, in terms of the war and their functions, has been touched.

This is a very important book and I recommend it to all audiences. It should be printed and made available to the Macedonian people and to a much wider audience.

Professor Dr. Vlado Popovski



## ATTACHMENTS

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GS KFOR March 29, 01  
Morning Report

1. Most important event: It was reported that the FYROM Army has started its offensive against the terrorist groups in the areas Gratsani and Malina Maala, during which they used artillery and grenades.

2. Tetovo: The situation north and west of Tetovo is unclear, but refugees in huge numbers are moving across the border. Many are prevented by KFOR. Some of those people are detained and their military equipment and ammunition is being seized.

Minor combat actions have been reported mainly in areas around Seltse, Germo and Vesala. Artillery fire was heard in the direction of Germo (from Tetovo).

3. Presevska Dolina / GSZ. In GSZ (Ground Security-zone) the struggle between UCPMB and MUP in Tserevaika Region (EM 4686), northwest of Presevo, is continuing. One member of the MUP police force was heavily wounded. The Serbian forces were allowed access to a helicopter for medical evacuation.

Yesterday afternoon, MNB (East) detained eight ethnic Albanians near Zaskosnik (EM 491 940). All parties were confirmed to be UCPMB members, but had left the organization claiming that they were too young and found it very dangerous. Comment: These people probably belonged to the "Maxhere" faction of UCPMB which operates in the Presevo area (ZOP). As a result of the situation in ZOP, it is possible that these ethnic Albanians are defectors because of the long struggles in this area and the fact that the Serbians are about to penetrate Sector B.

KFOR activities in support of FYROM:

Last evening MNB (East) reported hearing explosions near Derven (EM 208 610). The unit that heard the explosions identified them as

mortar fire. A short time later MNB (E) observed four people near Gratsani (EM 214 610). These people wore black uniforms and arms but they could not be captured.

At 23:50 hours, the same unit reported seeing a group of 50 to 60 armed men moving near the border (on the FYROM side) in the region GR EM 2259. The movement of these people was observed as MNB (East) forces prepared to intervene in case they tried to cross the border. The group went out of sight after midnight; MNB (E) was intending to send air monitoring in order to follow their movement.

4. Intelligence: GS KFOR later reported that all the residents of the village Słuptsane (EM 51 69) have been evacuated. The total number of people is 500 and they all are of ethnic Albanian origin. The reason for leaving is unknown. The direction they are going is unknown.

## GENERAL ASSESMENT

We were informed that Tetovo was peaceful and that there was no significant fighting in the hills north of the city. In the border region a total of 79 individuals were encountered by MNB (j), a large number of whom tossed their arms in front of KFOR soldiers. A determined amount of arms and other military equipment was taken. It is understandable that 44 individuals were taken to prison at the MNB (j) prison in Prizren for further questioning. Other than that, nearly 600 refugees left for Kosovo. And it looks like a lot more are attempting to get to Kosovo. MNB (j) sent 2 additional units to that region. UNHCR estimated that 7,600 refugees have crossed into Kosovo since February 16, of which 3,700 crossed in the last 3 days.

With the view that violence in FYROM seems to be subsiding, attention now is being focused towards the movement of refugees and former armed Albanian extremists who are returning over the border.

## INTELLEGENCE INFORMATION

(N / K S) (ORKFOR) around 150 supporters of the armed Albanian extremists in FYROM, from Tetovo Region, were attempting to flee over the border to Kosovo in the course of the early morning hours. By afternoon KFOR units collected 78 of them. With their escape to Kosovo they will undoubtedly attempt to identify themselves as refugees who are fleeing the shooting. But it cannot be precluded that the anger and frustration of these individuals will not be turned towards KFOR.

## OPERATIVE SITUATION

1. The action of encircling and searching Krivenik in close proximity to FYROM's border. On the 27<sup>th</sup> at 06:10 hours, Polukrbat conducted an encirclement and search of a questionable house in Krivenik (EM 227 624). The night before 20 individuals had entered the house carrying boxes and suitcases into the house. When they searched the house they found an AKM 7,62mm rifle with 27 boxes of ammunition, an M-57 7,62mm pistol with 6 cases of ammunition and 1 bullet-proof vest. The boxes that were observed the night before were filled with food; the house was a grocery store.

2. On the 27<sup>th</sup> at 1325 hours HRS 4-27 I 13 TG informed that 7 Albanian people came over control point 75 (EN 550 050) on the road to Vitina. They left Skopje to escape the violence in Macedonia and to visit their aunt. They were a father, a mother, four children and one friend of the family. The father was to leave the family and return back to Skopje and go to work.

The above was a report filed by the South Brigade of the KFOR composition responsible for providing border security between the Republic of Macedonia and Kosovo.

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Dear Mr. Peter Faith

It is an honour to inform you of the following:

We are prepared to end the crisis which undermines the peaceful democratic development of the Republic of Macedonia and which

poses a direct threat to the stability of this region. Believing that an unconditional ceasefire, for which the conditions are confirmed below, is a concrete step towards a broader objective to solving the crisis.

NATO's intention to assist in disarming and disbanding the armed "ethnic Albanian groups" is welcome. The presence of the NATO mission for this purpose is welcome. Welcomed also are the preconditions for NATO's deployment, and for providing assistance in the process of disarmament in particular:

- That a general, unconditional and permanent ceasefire must be achieved, and
- That sufficient progress in dialogue between the various political parties must be achieved, as defined by NATO and by the EU.

Reaffirming its commitment to implement the plan for building confidence measures without delay, regarding which the Government of the Republic of Macedonia has decided the following:

1. Unconditional respect and adherence to the ceasefire; refrain from all military actions; refrain from use of force and illegal actions against the ethnic Albanian armed groups;
2. Recognize and adhere to the extended Geneva Conventions Protocol (Protocol II) of August 12, 1949, regarding the protection of victims of international conflict;
3. The ceasefire applies to all ARM security forces. The Government of the Republic of Macedonia will ensure that the provisions of this document also apply to all irregular forces and armed civilian groups;
4. The definition "armed forces" includes groups and individuals from all sides who accept the authority and command of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia, including regular forces, police forces, border police, army and police reserves, military police, intelligence services, Ministry of Interior local police and

special anti-terrorism and police forces which maintain public order and peace;

5. Securing international observers;

6. Provisions of the ceasefire will go into effect starting on July 6, 2001 at 00:01 hours.

## 7. MODALITIES

a) Ceasefire applies to all weapons, including the installation of mines or improvised devices.

b) The Government of the Republic of Macedonia is taking all possible measures to ensure security and freedom of movement for all international community personnel.

c) They will maintain the current position of their armed forces, except where arrangements are made to enable local disengagements or where government forces are instructed to return to the barracks. The ceasefire must not be exploited to improve their positions.

## 8. WARNING

a) After the ceasefire goes into effect, law enforcement forces will perform their duties without bias and will fully act against all threats to the Republic of Macedonia without any ethnic, religious, or racial prejudice.

b) None of the above ceasefire provisions will be interpreted as loss of the inherent right to self-defense, meaning using proportional force necessary for self-defense from limited or continuous attack. Any use of force must be limited to the extent, intensity and duration necessary for self-defense and no more. Revenge is not self-defense and represents a violation of the ceasefire.

Chief of Staff of General Headquarters  
Lieutenant General,  
Pande Petrovski s.r.

Chief of the Interior Ministry police units  
General,  
Risto Galevski

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August 2001

Dear Vice President,

In response to a letter received from President Boris Trajkovski on June 14, 2001, in which he sought help from NATO to disarm the ethnic Albanian armed groups, I have the honour to inform you that the ethnic Albanian armed groups have given their commitment to a disarmament, which represents one of the elements of NAC (North Atlantic Council) for NATO to provide assistance for this purpose in close coordination with your authorities. The authorities of the Republic of Macedonia will be informed of the detailed military plan for the collection of weapons compiled by the commander of Task Force 'Harvest' right after NAC decides to authorize the realignment of forces. As you know the prerequisites for this displacement are as follows:

- Permanent ceasefire respected by all parties;
- General political agreement between the main political parties;
- Agreement with the authorities of the Republic of Macedonia on the status of Task Force Harvest and conditions on which Task Force Harvest will carry out its mission;
- Plan prepared by NATO and accepted by the Government of the Republic of Macedonia that defines the modalities and the time and space for the decommissioning of weapons, including explicit consent of the ethnic Albanian armed groups for their willingness to completely surrender their arms.

The mission of Task Force Harvest will be tasked to conduct limited operations in the Republic of Macedonia in order to collect and remove weapons and ammunition from disarmed ethnic Albanian groups as part of the resolution of the crisis in the country. The Force will be deployed in a limited time period in which the

operation of collecting arms will not exceed 30 days. The Force will consist of a multinational single size brigade.

As you know, NATO legal advisers and those from your side are currently working on a formal agreement that will define the status and personnel of Task Force Harvest, including an Agreement that spells out your request. Task Force Harvest is authorized to use force for self-defense and for the protection and implementation of the mission, including the possibility of removing any party that would hinder the implementation of the mission as it is defined here.

Task Force Harvest will passively collect all weapons and ammunition surrendered by the ethnic Albanian armed groups and will coordinate its destruction. All collected ammunition and explosives will be destroyed in the country. All collected weapons will be removed and destroyed in a third party country, unless Task Force Harvest Command believes that it is not safe. Representatives of the Republic of Macedonia will be invited by Task Force Harvest Command to observe the operation.

First, those members of the armed groups who turn in their weapons and ammunition will not be detained, except in certain cases. This is a measure taken to protect the forces, for self-defense purposes and to efficiently implement the mission.

In performing its mission, Task Force Harvest will make arrangements to connect with your central and local authorities in order to facilitate the creation and necessary coordination to ensure full transparency in the execution of the operation. There will be no state security forces present during the weapon's collection operation in any of the areas designated as location for those tasks. Representatives from the Republic of Macedonia, authorized by Task Force Harvest Command, will be invited to observe the operation.

You are invited to accept responsibility for the security and freedom of movement for NATO forces and International Community personnel involved in the disarmament process in the Republic of Macedonia and to take all possible measures to minimize the risk to their safety out of the weapons collection locations and to

temporarily relocate your security forces as determined by NATO so that the disarming process can be realized.

I think there are a number of other measures that your government must also take in order for this operation to succeed. First, as a measure of confidence building, you are required to stop all military air operations during the operation, with the exception of those made for regular logistics needs and casualty evacuation in an emergency that will be carried out in coordination with Task Force Harvest Command. Furthermore, you are required to pull all heavy weaponry and garrison forces away from the ethnic Albanian groups during the collection of weapons, taking into account requirements for the protection of the Macedonian security forces.

Second, as provided in the Plan and Program, members of the ethnic Albanian armed groups should be given opportunities for reintegration into society, including adequate amnesty, in order to overcome the crisis.

Third, after the operation is completed, the state security forces, with the participation of ethnic Albanian police officers, will carry out normal peacetime law enforcement duties in all parts of the country without opposition or interference. During the implementation, security forces will strictly abide by international humanitarian standards and general principles of human rights and will accept monitoring by the OSCE and EUM. Your authorities must ensure that no irregular forces or armed civilian groups are activated in the crisis regions.

I would be grateful if I can get your written confirmation that the content of this letter constitutes the basis for implementing the operation.

Sincerely,  
Peter Faith  
Personal Representative to the NATO Secretary General

Vice President Filipovski  
President of the Coordinating Body



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REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA  
MINISTRY OF DEFENSE  
General Headquarters

Dear Peter Faith,

As signatories of the ceasefire document, we would like to inform you that on July 29, 2001, around 19:15 hours, our forces, stationed in the vicinity of the village Lavtsi, came under machinegun fire from the village Gaire (from the mosque and school). Three members of our force were wounded.

We immediately dispatched an ambulance to evacuate the wounded. At around 19:30 hours the ambulance was fired upon with an MF 82 mm grenade launcher from the school in the village. Another soldier was heavily wounded.

Considering what happened on this day: the attack on the barracks, the loss of two innocent civilians and the incidents this evening; we strongly protest and are informing you that we will take appropriate measures to destroy the terrorists anywhere they are to be found and that in the future such provocations will not be tolerated. We will fight back with all available means to protect the dignity of the Army and the Macedonian people.

Chief of Staff of General Headquarters  
General  
Pande Petrovski

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April 12

General Pande

Congratulations on a great victory by the Armed Forces of the Republic of Macedonia.

A demonstration of pride and professionalism in protecting the sovereignty of the Republic.

Richard Griffith  
Major General MPRI Chief USA

After the Tetovo operation, Griffith was among the first to personally come to General Headquarters to congratulate me on our success.

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