

# CRS Report for Congress

Received through the CRS Web

## **Macedonia: Country Background and Recent Conflict**

**Updated November 7, 2001**

Julie Kim  
Specialist in International Relations  
Foreign Affairs, Defense, and Trade Division

# Macedonia: Country Background and Recent Conflict

## Summary

Sharing borders with Kosovo and Serbia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) managed to avoid becoming directly involved in the drawn-out wars in Bosnia and Kosovo in the 1990s. Inter-ethnic relations between the Slav majority and ethnic Albanian minority in Macedonia, while often tense, never reached the crisis state of Albanian-Serb relations in the province of Kosovo. Since Macedonia's independence in 1991, ethnic Albanian political parties in Macedonia have been represented in government and in parliament.

In 2001, ethnic Albanian rebels calling themselves the National Liberation Army (NLA) stepped up attacks on Macedonian security forces first in several villages near the city of Tetovo and by the western border with Kosovo, and later near the capital, Skopje. The NLA is thought to have ties to the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) and rebel Albanian forces operating in southern Serbia. In March, the Macedonian government began a counter-insurgency campaign. It opened talks on political reforms with elected ethnic Albanian representatives, but refused to negotiate with the rebels themselves. Clashes between the rebels and government forces continued, notwithstanding intermittent cease-fire agreements and ongoing political talks. With U.S. and European diplomatic intervention, the parties signed a framework agreement on August 13, amidst the deadliest violence to date. Deadlock in the Macedonian parliament over aspects of the accord has delayed implementation of the agreement by several weeks.

In June, NATO formulated and approved plans to launch a limited operation in Macedonia to help disarm the rebel forces. The force was not to be deployed until several preconditions were met, including a durable cease-fire. On August 22, NATO gave final approval for the deployment of Operation Essential Harvest comprising about 4,500 troops in total. The operation completed collection of a targeted amount of rebel weapons on September 26, 2001. NATO then deployed a smaller follow-on force to provide security for international civilian monitors. NATO's peacekeeping force in Kosovo (KFOR) has also been involved in patrolling and reinforcing the Kosovo border in order to try to cut off Albanian rebel supply routes.

In early 2001, the international community, including the United States, condemned the violent actions of the Albanian extremists and expressed support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Macedonia, while urging restraint on the part of the Macedonian forces. At the invitation of President Bush, Macedonian President Trajkovski came to Washington on May 2, where President Bush underscored U.S. support for Macedonia's efforts to resolve the conflict. While not leading NATO's Task Force Harvest mission, the United States supported the operation with medical, intelligence, and logistical assets provided by U.S. military forces and facilities already stationed in the Balkans. NATO allies have agreed to replace U.S. armed forces in the NATO Balkans missions if the United States needs to divert some of them to the anti-terrorist campaign in Afghanistan. U.S. officials have pressed the Macedonian and Albanian parties to implement the framework agreement.

## Contents

|                                                  |    |
|--------------------------------------------------|----|
| Introduction .....                               | 1  |
| Political Background .....                       | 2  |
| Macedonian-Albanian Ethnic Tensions .....        | 4  |
| Recent Conflict .....                            | 5  |
| All-Party Coalition and Peace Talks .....        | 8  |
| Peace Agreement - Status of Implementation ..... | 10 |
| Operation Essential Harvest .....                | 11 |
| Extended Military and Civilian Presence .....    | 13 |
| Other International Responses .....              | 13 |
| KFOR .....                                       | 13 |
| United Nations .....                             | 14 |
| European Union .....                             | 15 |
| U.S. Policy .....                                | 17 |

# Macedonia:<sup>1</sup> Country Background and Recent Conflict

## Introduction

For nearly a decade, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia managed to escape the kind of brutal ethnic conflict in Croatia, Bosnia, and Kosovo that accompanied the breakup of the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s. The international community gave high priority to preventing the spread of ethnic conflict to Macedonia, since it was feared that war in Macedonia could quickly involve some or all of Macedonia's neighboring countries and lead to a broader Balkan war. Macedonia was held up as a model, albeit an imperfect one, of inter-ethnic coexistence and democratic rule, with active participation of the Albanian community in political institutions, despite persistent discord in inter-ethnic relations. The swift emergence in early 2001 of a militant ethnic Albanian guerrilla movement in western Macedonia therefore caught many observers by surprise.

By March, violent conflict between the rebels and Macedonian security forces had spread to several areas around the city of Tetovo, prompting the Macedonian government to embark on a major military campaign to quell the insurgency in western Macedonia. With strong international backing, the government opened all-party talks on inter-ethnic issues in April. A new national unity government comprised of all major political parties was created in May. Clashes between rebel and government forces continued in some areas of the country, as marathon talks among all coalition parties on political reforms remained deadlocked. An open-ended cease-fire agreement reached on July 5 allowed talks to continue, in spite of intermittent truce violations. Negotiations finally reached agreement on key reform issues in early August. The political parties signed an agreement on August 13, paving the way for the deployment of a small NATO force to begin disarming the rebel forces. Operation Essential Harvest, comprising 4,500 European forces, began collecting rebel weapons on August 27 and completed its mission within a month. A much smaller task force remains in Macedonia to provide security for international civilian monitors overseeing the process of implementing inter-ethnic reforms.

Several factors may have accounted for the emergence of the rebel insurgency in Macedonia. The primary factor appears to have been the increasing radicalism of disparate ethnic Albanian militant groups operating in Kosovo, Serbia, and

---

<sup>1</sup>This state entered the United Nations in May 1992 under the provisional name "The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia." Its name is subject to negotiations under U.N. auspices between the republic and Greece, which has opposed its northern neighbor's use of the name "Macedonia." For the sake of simplicity, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) shall herein be referred to as Macedonia.

Macedonia, many of whom are linked to organized crime and regional smuggling rings. Some contend that their growing radicalism stems from the unresolved status of Kosovo and limited progress in realizing Kosovar self-government since the end of the Kosovar war in mid-1999.<sup>2</sup> The international embrace of the post-Milosevic Yugoslav and Serbian leadership since late 2000 may have discouraged some ethnic Albanians' hopes for Kosovar independence, to which the international community has not agreed. Some observers speculate that Albanian rebels in Kosovo, Serbia, and Macedonia seek to provoke a heavy-handed response by the Serb or Macedonian forces, in order to elicit Western sympathy and support. Meanwhile, members of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), who were supposed to have disbanded and given up their weapons to the NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR) by mid-1999, instead reportedly regrouped in the demilitarized buffer zone around Kosovo and transferred arms to Macedonia. A contributing factor to the rebellion may have been the February 2001 border agreement between Macedonia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY), which tightened border controls and led to greater conflict between Macedonian border police and ethnic Albanian smugglers. Underlying inter-ethnic tensions and poor economic conditions (especially among ethnic Albanians) in Macedonia provide potentially fertile ground for a drawn-out conflict.

## Political Background

Macedonia is one of six former republics of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.<sup>3</sup> Under the leadership of Josip Broz Tito, Macedonians were granted the status of constituent nation, language, and culture equal to that of the other Yugoslav republics. Following the example of Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia declared its independence in late 1991 after holding a national referendum on the issue. Under the provisional name "The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia," Macedonia became a member of the United Nations in May 1992. It subsequently joined several other international organizations under this provisional name.

Macedonia has a unicameral parliament, the 120-seat National Assembly (Sobranje), and a popularly elected President. From 1991 to 1999, socialist leader Kiro Gligorov served as President. Gligorov took credit for Macedonia's success in achieving international recognition and for preventing the country from being drawn into other Yugoslav conflicts.

---

<sup>2</sup>U.N. Resolution 1244, which provides for an interim international protectorate for Kosovo, calls for the province to achieve autonomy within the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. For additional information see CRS Report RL31053, *Kosovo and U.S. Policy*, updated regularly.

<sup>3</sup>Prior to this century, Macedonia had comprised a much larger geographic area. After the Balkan wars of 1912-1913, Macedonia was partitioned among Bulgaria, Greece, and Serbia. The Serbian part became the Yugoslav republic of Macedonia.

In the last parliamentary elections held in October and November 1998, the Macedonian electorate voted out the long-standing former communist leadership in favor of a coalition headed by the nationalist Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization-Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (VMRO-DPMNE), led by Ljubco Georgievski. The coalition included the newly formed Democratic Alternative (DA) party led by Vasil Tupurkovski, and the Democratic Party of Albanians (DPA) led by Arben Xhaferi.<sup>4</sup> Coalition tensions, especially between the DA and VMRO-DPMNE, persisted (though the tensions were unrelated to inter-

ethnic issues). The government underwent several cabinet reshuffles and steadily lost popularity. In the 1999 presidential elections, Boris Trajkovski of the governing VMRO-DPMNE party narrowly defeated Tito Petkovski of Gligorov's Social Democratic Party (SDSM), primarily on the strength of the ethnic Albanian vote. Some voting irregularities were reported in the presidential vote as well as in late 2000 municipal elections.

In November 2000, the Democratic Alternative party withdrew from the coalition in an apparent effort to bring down the government and join ranks with the opposition. However, the Georgievski government quickly replaced the DA with the small Liberal Party. The new coalition held just under a majority in parliament, opening the possibility of early elections (the next parliamentary elections were due in 2002). The government also became plagued with political scandals and low popularity ratings. However, the opposition was not able to unify as a governing alternative to the VMRO-DPMNE-led coalition. An all-party coalition replaced the government in May 2001. Early elections are expected to be held by January 2002.

Formerly the poorest republic in the Yugoslav federation, Macedonia continues to face economic difficulties stemming from internal reforms, external challenges, and more recently, internal ethnic conflict. Macedonia's economy was hit hard by U.N. sanctions against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) from 1992 to 1996, by a unilateral Greek trade embargo from 1994 to 1995, and by the Kosovo conflict in 1999. Over 90% of the country's enterprises have been privatized, but most still await major restructuring. In line with guidance from the International Monetary Fund, the Macedonian government maintained a tight monetary policy, resulting in a sharp drop in inflation and in the budget deficit, but only slight economic recovery.

### **Macedonia (FYROM) at a Glance**

|                          |                                                                                                                |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Area:</i>             | 25,333 sq. km.; slightly larger than Vermont                                                                   |
| <i>Population:</i>       | 1.95 million (1994 census)                                                                                     |
| <i>Ethnic Groups:</i>    | Macedonian: 66.5%<br>Albanian: 22.9%<br>Turk: 4% Serb: 2%<br>Roma (gypsies): 2.3%<br>other: 0.4% (1994 census) |
| <i>Religious Groups:</i> | Eastern Orthodox: 67%<br>Muslim: 30%<br>Other: 3%                                                              |
| <i>GDP:</i>              | \$3.46 billion<br>(2000 estimate)                                                                              |
| <i>Leadership</i>        |                                                                                                                |
| <i>President:</i>        | Boris Trajkovski (since 12/99)                                                                                 |
| <i>Prime Minister:</i>   | Ljubco Georgievski (since 11/98)                                                                               |

Sources: *Europa World Yearbook* 2000; *Financial Times* Survey (February 19, 2001).

<sup>4</sup>The other main ethnic Albanian party, the Party for Democratic Prosperity, served in the previous leftist government.

Macedonia has received little foreign direct investment, although the Georgievski government managed to secure a landmark investment deal to privatize the country's telecommunications utility. Unemployment runs between 25% and 35% of the workforce. GDP growth, extremely modest in recent years, was forecast to stay level at about 5% in 2001-2002, but will likely decline by about 4% as a result of the recent conflict.<sup>5</sup> In April 2001, Macedonia became the first southeast European country to conclude a Stabilization and Association Agreement with the European Union. However, a donors conference for Macedonia planned for October 2001 was postponed indefinitely because of Macedonia's lack of progress in implementing political reforms.

Macedonia's military, the Army of the Republic of Macedonia (ARM), has been undergoing a major restructuring and reform process. Macedonia participates in NATO's Partnership for Peace (PFP) program and is among the "Vilnius" group of ten countries seeking to join NATO. The Army of the Republic of Macedonia comprises about 15,000 active duty soldiers, 60,000 reserves, and 7,500 paramilitary police. It is organized into three brigades, including one border guard brigade.<sup>6</sup> The armed forces and police are considered to be poorly trained and equipped mainly with Soviet-design tanks and some U.S.-made Humvee vehicles. The Macedonian air force comprises under 700 troops, with only a handful of aircraft and helicopters. In June 2001, the ARM chief of staff, General Jovan Andrevski, resigned, citing low troop morale. In August, another armed forces chief of staff, General Pande Petrovski, resigned after 10 ARM soldiers were killed in a rebel ambush. Since early 2001, Ukraine and Bulgaria have served as Macedonia's primary arms suppliers. In addition to the state security structures, media sources have reported the emergence of several unofficial paramilitary organizations in parts of the country.<sup>7</sup> One unit, known as the "Lions," is under the command of hardline Interior Minister Ljube Boskovski.

## **Macedonian-Albanian Ethnic Tensions**

Relations between the Slav Macedonian majority and ethnic Albanian minority in Macedonia have remained tense since the country's independence. Though not to be compared with the situation in Kosovo under Milosevic's rule, Macedonia has nonetheless remained a largely segregated country. Albanians in Macedonia as a whole have demanded greater cultural and educational rights, such as recognizing Albanian as an official language and providing state support for their underground Albanian-language university in Tetovo.<sup>8</sup> Albanians have sought greater representation in the government, armed forces and police. They have objected to the preamble of the constitution which refers to the Macedonian nation, which they contend relegates Albanians to the status of second-class citizens. They have claimed

---

<sup>5</sup>Republic of Macedonia Survey, *The Financial Times*, February 19, 2001; Macedonia Country Outlook, Economist Intelligence Unit; Reuters, October 19, 2001.

<sup>6</sup>*The Military Balance, 2000-2001*, International Institute for Strategic Studies.

<sup>7</sup>RFE/RL Balkan Report, Vol. 5, No. 42, June 15, 2001.

<sup>8</sup>The Macedonian government agreed, under OSCE mediation, to the establishment of a private Albanian-language university, which has yet to be opened.

to represent as much as 40% of the country's population, not the 22.9% recorded in the June 1994 census. A new census was scheduled to be held in June 2001, but was postponed in view of the recent conflict.

In contrast, many Macedonians have asserted that the Albanian minority enjoys sufficient rights, comparable to or better than other minority communities in Europe. They have remained suspicious of Albanian demands for autonomy, which they fear could lead to eventual secession or partition and unification with Albania or Kosovo. Tensions led to open clashes on several occasions during the 1990s, especially in the western cities of Tetovo and Gostivar. The conduct of the 1999 presidential elections, with charges of violence and ballot-stuffing in ethnic Albanian districts, heightened inter-ethnic tensions, although neither presidential candidate was ethnic Albanian. In spite of these problems, one of the two major ethnic Albanian parties has been in the government since Macedonia's independence, with ethnic Albanian cabinet ministers.

The conflict in neighboring Kosovo in 1999 exacerbated inter-ethnic tensions in Macedonia. About 250,000 Kosovar Albanian refugees flooded into Macedonia during the height of the crisis. Macedonian authorities were at times reluctant to accept Kosovar Albanian refugees and pressed for many thousands of them to be evacuated to third countries. The Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) maintained a presence in Macedonia during the conflict. Macedonian authorities frequently intercepted and seized weapons deliveries en route to Kosovo.

## **Recent Conflict**

Attacks by ethnic Albanian guerrilla forces on Macedonian police and security forces in late 2000 and early 2001 appeared to catch the Macedonian government and international community by surprise. The attacks began in small villages such as Tanusevci in western Macedonia, close to or on the Kosovo border, where the Albanian minority is concentrated. In March 2001, clashes spread to the city of Tetovo (located about 30 km west of the capital, Skopje). After a brief lull, fighting resumed in several areas, reaching a new level in early June, as rebel forces captured towns just outside of Skopje and to the north around Kumanovo.

In January, a group calling itself the National Liberation Army (NLA, or UCK in Albanian) claimed responsibility for the attacks on police forces. Initial reports gave conflicting information on the NLA. Macedonian President Trajkovski and Prime Minister Georgievski claimed that the rebels were primarily Kosovo Liberation Army members who had infiltrated the country from Kosovo. The government estimated that the rebels numbered only in the hundreds and charged them with trying to divide the country and create a pan-Albanian state. Macedonian officials blamed NATO for not doing enough to disarm the Kosovo rebel forces, discourage their encampment in the buffer zone (Ground Safety Zone) area between Kosovo and Serbia, or prevent their entry into Macedonia.

Members of the National Liberation Army claimed that the rebel force comprised a few to several thousand men, mainly from Macedonia. Its leaders include Ali Ahmeti

and his uncle, Fazli Veliu, from western Macedonia.<sup>9</sup> Ahmeti has claimed that the rebels' only objective is to improve the rights of the Albanian community in Macedonia. On March 19, western news agencies reported a list of political demands by the NLA rebels that included: international mediation to resolve their differences with the Slavic majority and determine the exact size of the ethnic Albanian community; changes in the Macedonian constitution recognizing Albanians as a constituent people; and, the release of all political prisoners. Rebels said that they sought the federalization of the country, but not its dismemberment. They called on all ethnic Albanians in Macedonia to join their ranks, and on ethnic Albanians worldwide to support their movement with volunteers and funds.<sup>10</sup> By August, the NLA claimed a strength of 16,000, although other estimates suggested they numbered about 2,000-2,500 full-time NLA combatants.<sup>11</sup>

Neither of the two main ethnic Albanian political parties initially claimed association with the NLA. On March 20, the two mainstream ethnic Albanian parties signed a declaration condemning the use of force in pursuit of political objectives. However, they have expressed sympathy with the rebels' demands for Albanian equity and acknowledge that they risked losing support among ethnic Albanians to the NLA by appearing to side with the Macedonian authorities. On March 11, a group of nationalist Albanian politicians (including two members of parliament) launched a new nationalist Albanian political party called the National Democratic Party. Although it claimed no direct link to the National Liberation Army, its political manifesto included demands for the federalization of the country and greater autonomy for the Albanian population.<sup>12</sup> In August, a splinter ethnic Albanian rebel group calling itself the Albanian National Army (ANA) claimed responsibility for an ambush attack against a Macedonian army convoy that killed 10 soldiers. The self-styled ANA has rejected the agreement signed by Macedonia's political leaders on August 13 and has pledged to continue to fight for a "greater Albania."<sup>13</sup> Following the terrorist attacks against the United States on September 11, NLA leaders made clear that they have no association with Osama bin Laden or any other radical Islamic movements.

In response to the initial rebel attacks, the government made preparations to launch a military offensive to drive out the rebels out of Macedonian towns and villages and into Kosovo. President Trajkovski said that the government had first to "neutralize the terrorist threat," but offered the prospect of entering into political dialogue with legitimate political parties on inter-ethnic relations. The government steadfastly refused to negotiate any terms with "terrorists." In late March, the Macedonian armed forces began a series of offensives to regain control of rebel-held

---

<sup>9</sup>Many ethnic Albanians from Macedonia volunteered to serve with the KLA during the Kosovo conflict. See "The Macedonian Question: Reform or Rebellion," International Crisis Group Report 109, April 5, 2001.

<sup>10</sup>"Albanian War Cry Rises Half a World Away, in Staten Island," *The New York Times*, March 19, 2001.

<sup>11</sup>*Jane's Defense Weekly*, August 29, 2001.

<sup>12</sup>"Formation of new political party in Macedonia concerns NATO leaders," Knight Ridder/Tribune Business News, March 12, 2001.

<sup>13</sup>Reuters, August 16, 2001.

villages, mainly around Tetovo. At first, the army encountered little organized resistance and managed to regain control over some villages.

After a lull of several weeks, during which time the Macedonian and Albanian political parties launched roundtable discussions, violence resumed in some areas and began a new stage of the conflict. On April 28, ethnic Albanian guerrillas ambushed a Macedonian army and police convoy in the village of Vejce near Tetovo, killing eight and wounding three others. The attack sparked riots by Slav Macedonians against ethnic Albanian businesses in the southern city of Bitola, near Greece. On May 3, Albanian rebels launched another ambush on security forces in Vaksince, near Skopje, killing two Macedonian soldiers and kidnapping a third. In response, the government deployed helicopters gunships and began counter-attacks against rebel forces in several villages in the Kumanovo region. During a brief truce in mid-May, the government declared victory amid reports of widespread desertions among rebel forces. Sporadic clashes persisted in some villages in the hills above Tetovo.

At the end of May, in the midst of a political crisis within the all-party coalition, government forces launched another offensive in the north of the country, using long-range attacks on rebel-held villages. However, government forces were unable to deal a defeating blow to the rebels, who countered the attacks and advanced toward Tetovo and Skopje. Five Army soldiers were killed in a rebel attack in Tetovo on June 6. On June 10, rebel forces captured Aracinovo, on the outskirts of the capital, threatening the start of an urban warfare-style conflict. On June 11, both sides announced a cease-fire, which was later extended until June 27. Government forces ended the truce on June 22 and bombarded rebel territory near Aracinovo. International leaders decried the resumption of hostilities. Another local cease-fire arranged by EU envoy Javier Solana included terms for the evacuation of Albanian guerrilla forces from Aracinovo under international supervision. NATO assisted in implementing the evacuation; however, clashes resumed in Tetovo and angry demonstrators in Skopje protested the NATO-assisted escort of armed Albanian rebels from Aracinovo. On July 1, rebel forces advanced into four more villages outside of Tetovo, prompting fierce counter-attacks by government forces. NATO and EU envoys brokered separate open-ended cease-fire agreements on July 5, granting another chance for the political dialogue to produce results.

Both sides reportedly used the cease-fire to resupply and regroup their forces. Numerous truce violations were reported. A severe break-down took place in late July when Albanian rebels advanced into territory around Tetovo. Thousands of Slav Macedonians fled their homes and dozens were wounded in the offensive. On July 25, NATO secured an agreement with the rebels to reinstate the cease-fire, have the rebel forces pull back from their advanced positions, and allow displaced persons to return to their homes. Meanwhile, hundreds of Slav Macedonian protesters in Skopje, angered by what they perceived to be Western support for the Albanian minority, attacked the U.S. embassy and other Western missions on July 24.

The deadliest fighting in the conflict occurred in early August, just as political talks were drawing to a successful close (see next section). On August 7,

Macedonian police launched a raid on rebel forces in Skopje, killing five.<sup>14</sup> The police seized a cache of weapons from the rebels and accused them of planning an attack on the capital. The next day, 10 Macedonian soldiers were killed in a rebel ambush between Skopje and Tetovo. Angry demonstrators staged violent protests in Skopje, and battles continued between the rebel and government forces in Tetovo over the next few days. The Macedonian army deployed fighter jets and reportedly dropped bombs on rebel-held villages near Tetovo. On August 10, 8 more security forces were killed after their vehicle struck two land mines outside of Skopje. In a retaliatory anti-terrorist raid on the village of Ljuboten (near Skopje) on August 12, government forces killed at least five ethnic Albanians. The government claimed the ones killed were NLA terrorists engaged in combat, but others claimed they were civilians executed in cold blood. Another truce was announced on August 12, but fresh clashes were reported over the next few days, even as political leaders signed a peace agreement on August 13. Low levels of sporadic fighting have since been reported. On August 19, NLA leader Ali Ahmeti announced that the rebel group would honor the peace accord and agreed to surrender weapons to NATO.

An estimated 100 persons have been killed in the conflict since it began in early 2001. About one-third of this total were killed during the final week of peace talks. The U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees has estimated that well over 100,000 civilians have left their homes since the beginning of the year, with over 70,000 fleeing to Kosovo. Several thousand additional Slav Macedonians fled their homes during the rebel advance around Tetovo in late July. In late August, the NLA released 15 Macedonian that had been held captive. Since the start of the implementation phase of the peace agreement, sporadic clashes have broken out, but have not led to the resurgence of sustained conflict.

## **All-Party Coalition and Peace Talks**

From the start of the conflict, Western leaders emphasized that the conflict in Macedonia required a political solution over a military one. They promoted the strategy of fostering a meaningful dialogue among all political parties that could lead quickly to tangible results on minority issues and prevent a longer-term conflict. They feared that prolonged violent conflict would only further polarize the ethnic communities, as well as incur greater civilian casualties and humanitarian consequences.

On April 2, President Trajkovski convened the first meeting of representatives of all of Macedonia's political parties to address inter-ethnic issues. The NLA demanded that it participate in the negotiations, but the Macedonian leadership steadfastly refused, saying it would only meet with elected representatives. On April 23, at the fifth round of all-party talks, President Trajkovski announced agreement on several minor issues. The parties agreed to postpone the census, take measures to encourage displaced persons to return to their homes, and assist in the reconstruction of homes destroyed during the fighting.

In addition to these talks, the parties discussed the creation of a more inclusive coalition government. Western leaders had strongly pressed for building a broad

---

<sup>14</sup>BBC news online, August 7, 2001.

coalition as a first step toward a peaceful resolution to the conflict. Under strong international pressure, the group of parties agreed to form a national unity government on May 11, even while a brief cease-fire was unraveling. Parliament overwhelmingly approved the new government on May 13, by a vote of 104 to 1. The previous governmental parties (VMRO-DPMNE, DPA, and LP) were joined by the Social Democratic Alliance of Macedonia (SDSM) and the Party for Democratic Prosperity (PDP). Ljubco Georgievski remained Prime Minister. Early elections are to be held before January 27, 2002, if the coalition is able to hold together until then.

Some observers contend that the creation of the all-party government, rather than promoting unity or compromise, has encouraged greater polarization, since the parties are looking ahead to the next elections and seeking to consolidate their bases of support. On May 22, the ethnic Albanian parties met with NLA representatives, under OSCE auspices, and reached agreement on an amnesty deal for the rebels. The accord was harshly denounced by the other government parties and by the international community. Although the talks were facilitated by OSCE envoy Robert Frowick, a U.S. diplomat, the United States said that it rejected the attempt to bring the NLA into the negotiating process. Intervention by EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana prevented a break-up of the coalition, which pledged on May 29 to put aside the controversial accord and work toward progress on inter-ethnic issues. The ethnic Albanian parties reportedly remained in close contact with the NLA during the political negotiations.

On June 8, President Trajkovski presented to parliament a security strategy that included the offer of a partial amnesty for the NLA. The strategy called first for a consolidated governmental effort to quell the rebel forces. It then outlined plans to facilitate the disarmament of the rebel forces and the reconstruction of homes. The government adopted the plan on June 12. On June 14, President Trajkovski requested NATO's assistance in disarming the rebel forces if a political agreement was reached. Trajkovski opened marathon talks with the political parties on June 15. The focus of discussions was on changes to the Macedonian constitution that would elevate the status of the Albanian community. By June 20, however, President Trajkovski announced that the talks had become "totally deadlocked." He lay most of the blame on the Albanian side, claiming that they sought veto powers and intended to turn the state into a federation of the Slav and Albanian communities. Talks briefly resumed on June 25, after another cease-fire was reached, but broke up the next day in the midst of the angry public demonstrations outside of the parliament building in Skopje.

In July, the discussions were revived with the arrival of EU envoy Francois Léotard and U.S. envoy Ambassador James Pardew. On July 4, the government agreed to study constitutional reform proposals prepared by outside French counsel. President Trajkovski announced on July 5 that the political dialogue on reforms had resumed, corresponding to the latest announced cease-fire. On July 7, peace envoys Léotard and Pardew presented to the negotiating parties a single framework document that was to be the basis for further negotiation. The parties agreed to work from the comprehensive framework document, reportedly based on an earlier proposal by French constitutional law expert Robert Badinter. Talks resumed on July 9, but quickly stalled as clashes intensified near Tetovo.

Political talks, relocated to the lakeside retreat of Ohrid, resumed on July 28. On August 1, negotiators announced the first major breakthrough in the talks - a

provisional agreement on use of the Albanian language. The parties agreed to allow Albanian to be considered an official language at the local level in areas where Albanians comprise 20% or more of the population. The language agreement was to remain subject to agreement on a final package of reforms. The next equally contentious item for discussion was the issue of police reform. On August 5, EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana, during a brief visit to Macedonia, announced that the parties had come to agreement on increasing Albanian representation in the police, while keeping the force under central government control. New demands coupled with renewed violence threatened to derail the talks once more. Nevertheless, negotiators pressed on and the parties initialed a final political agreement on August 8.

The parties signed the Ohrid agreement in Skopje in a private ceremony on August 13. The following day, the NLA agreed to surrender its weapons under NATO supervision. In exchange, the President pledged to grant amnesty to the NLA, excluding those suspected of war crimes. On August 15, the Macedonian government formally approved the deployment of a NATO force to collect weapons. The agreement required that parliament pass constitutional amendments and legislation implementing the reforms within 45 days.

## **Peace Agreement - Status of Implementation**

Since achieving agreement on the framework peace agreement, both sides have resisted various aspects of implementation. Extremist elements on both sides may be more interested in resuming violent conflict than implementing political reforms.

On the Macedonian side, the more nationalist political leaders accused the West of supporting the Albanian rebel cause and many have become increasingly hostile to the international community. Prime Minister Georgievski, considered to be among the most hardline and nationalist Slav Macedonian politicians, referred to the draft agreement as “shameful” because it came while the rebels still occupied Macedonian territory. Georgievski has also criticized the small number of weapons that NATO agreed to collect, calling the disarmament terms “humiliating.”<sup>15</sup> On the Albanian side, the NLA’s exclusion from the political talks was thought to undermine the rebels’ commitment to disarm. Nevertheless, NLA leaders swiftly agreed to the terms of the agreement, although most observers doubt they would lack access to arms, even after the disarmament process was completed. The emergence of another, more hardline, Albanian rebel group, the self-styled Albanian National Army, pointed to growing divisions among the Albanian forces. Recurring incidents of violence, meanwhile, continued to threaten any further progress in implementing peace.

Given this environment, the timetable for parliamentary action was considered ambitious. The Macedonian parliament opened debate on the Ohrid framework agreement on August 31, but Speaker Stojan Andov blocked further discussion over the following weekend in protest of unsuccessful attempts by Macedonian refugees to return to their homes. On September 4, Prime Minister Georgievski harshly criticized the agreement, but nevertheless urged the parliament to pass it in order to

---

<sup>15</sup>*The Washington Post*, August 27, 2001.

gain international support. After lengthy debates, parliament gave initial endorsement to the framework plan on September 6 by a vote of 91 out of 112 members present. The landmark vote paved the way for the 2<sup>nd</sup> stage of weapons collection by NATO (see below) and also launched the parliamentary process to consider individual amendments to the constitution and other laws enhancing minority rights.

Parliament began debates on the amendments on September 13, the day NATO announced completion of the second of three stages of disarmament. Parliament was supposed to take a final vote on the entire reform package by September 27, forty-five days after the August 13 signing of the agreement, and corresponding to the process of rebel disarmament led by the NATO mission. However, numerous contentious issues contributed to substantial delays in the parliamentary process.

First, some members of parliament pressed for the consideration of a public referendum, in order to put the framework agreement's reforms before public opinion. Western leaders have criticized the referendum initiative, fearing that it would sink the peace process and encourage the Albanian rebels to revert to violence. NATO Secretary-General Lord Robertson, visiting Skopje on September 14, called the referendum proposal a "peace wrecking amendment," and said that it was time for the Macedonian parliament to fulfill their part of the peace deal and pass the amendments outlined in the peace agreement.

A major concern for the ethnic Albanian side has been the status of granting amnesty to former members of the NLA. President Trajkovski pledged to grant former rebels amnesty in August, although this was not formally included in the framework agreement. On October 9, the government issued a proclamation endorsing the President's pledge on amnesty, but the measure was considered to be unclear as to who would be covered by the amnesty. Many politicians, including Prime Minister Georgievski, oppose any moves to pardon those they consider to be "terrorists," especially in the final months before early elections in January 2002. Parliament has yet to take up any legislation on granting amnesty to former rebel fighters. The hardline Interior Ministry has been preparing to prosecute more than 200 former rebel fighters for war crimes and other criminal charges.

In the course of several missions to Macedonia, EU foreign policy chief Solana and NATO Secretary General Robertson attempted to revive the stalled parliamentary process of considering the peace agreement's amendments. In late October, the Macedonian side insisted on re-opening the wording of the constitution to include mention of the "Macedonian people" instead of just Macedonia's citizens, as called for in the framework agreement. On October 31, the parties pledged to move forward on each of the amendments and planned to pass an "enabling proclamation" ratifying the entire reform package on November 12. NATO Secretary General Robertson warned that further delays would "inevitably" lead to renewed violence. Parliamentary Speaker Andov expressed confidence that parliamentary approval could be achieved by November 12.

## **Operation Essential Harvest**

On June 14, President Trajkovski formally requested that NATO assist in implementing plans to demilitarize the rebel forces. On June 20, NATO members

agreed on a “concept of operations” for a NATO mission to send forces to Macedonia to supervise the disarmament of the rebel groups, once agreement on a peace plan was reached. In a letter to President Trajkovski, NATO Secretary-General Robertson reportedly said that the proposed operation would be confined in scope to the collection of weapons and would be deployed for a limited duration of time.<sup>16</sup>

On June 29, NATO members gave final approval to the “Essential Harvest” operational plan. The plan conditioned deployment on a political agreement signed by the main political parties, a status of forces agreement, an agreement by the rebels to voluntarily disarm, and a stable cease-fire. Following the signing ceremony for the peace agreement on August 13, the alliance approved the deployment of a vanguard team of about 400 troops to Macedonia. On August 20, NATO SACEUR Gen. Ralston visited Macedonia to assess the state of the truce, the primary pre-condition yet fully to be achieved.

The North Atlantic Council approved the full deployment of Operation Essential Harvest on August 22. 11 NATO member states began to deploy a total of about 4,500 troops. Britain led contributions with 1,400 armed forces. Next was Italy, with 800; France, with 550; Germany, with 400; Greece, with 400; Canada and the Netherlands, each with 200; Spain and Turkey, each with 150; the Czech Republic, with 125; Belgium, with 100; Hungary, with 50; Norway, with 12; Poland, with 6; and Denmark, with 1. Major General Gunnar Lange of Norway was the overall force commander. NATO forces established 15 collection centers to gather and destroy weapons surrendered voluntarily by the NLA. Estimates on the number of rebel weapons to be turned in differed widely. The NLA claimed to have about 2,300; the government’s estimates range from 8,000 to 85,000. Reliable figures on NLA arms holdings may not even exist, given the group’s lack of an integrated structure.<sup>17</sup> On August 24, NATO and the NLA reached agreement on a target of 3,300 weapons to be collected. NATO said that the force in Macedonia would only exercise military force in self-defense and will not seek to impose disarmament by force.

NATO troops in the Task Force Harvest mission began collecting weapons on August 27 and gathered over 400 weapons that day. One day earlier, the operation suffered its first casualty, when a British soldier was killed after being struck by a thrown rock or piece of concrete. Within days, the mission completed the 1<sup>st</sup> stage of weapons collection, drawing in 1,210 weapons, or more than one-third of the total goal. The 2<sup>nd</sup> stage began on September 7, after parliament voted to approve the agreement. On September 13, Task Force Harvest announced that it had collected over two-thirds of the rebels’ weapons, or 2,481 out of 3,300 weapons. After the third and final stage, over 3,300 weapons had been collected. Lord Robertson noted, however, that the Macedonian parliament, unlike NATO, had not kept to its schedule for implementing political reforms. Operation Essential Harvest was completed on September 26, and its forces redeployed out of the country within a couple of weeks. NLA leaders claimed they had ordered the full disbandment of its forces on September 27.

---

<sup>16</sup>Reuters, June 21, 2001.

<sup>17</sup>*Jane’s Defense Weekly*, August 29, 2001.

## **Extended Military and Civilian Presence**

From the start of the Essential Harvest operation, many observers expressed concerns about a potential security vacuum that would result after the planned departure of NATO forces. They feared the resumption of violent conflict between the rebel and governmental forces, and pointed to the need for security for international monitors on the ground. In spite of these concerns, the alliance made clear that the Essential Harvest operation would adhere to a strict timetable. Moreover, alliance officials said that NATO had no plans to deploy an extended peacekeeping operation in Macedonia (“MFOR”) similar to the SFOR or KFOR operations in Bosnia and Kosovo.

Many in the Macedonian government opposed an extended deployment of NATO troops in Macedonia which they feared might solidify a territorial division of the country or prevent Macedonian security forces from reclaiming rebel-held ground. Macedonian President Trajkovski said he would favor the reintroduction of the U.N. Preventive Deployment mission to provide security along Macedonia’s borders. Other options were also considered, such as the creation of an EU force or ad hoc “coalition of the willing.”

For a variety of reasons, a NATO or NATO-led option gained the most international support. On September 19, 2001, the Macedonian government formally requested that NATO provide a “light presence” to protect international monitors in Macedonia after the completion of Operation Essential Harvest. The North Atlantic Council approved the Operational Plan for the new mission, dubbed “Amber Fox,” on September 26. Its mandate is to provide security for international monitors overseeing implementation of the peace plan. The NAC issued an Activation Order for Operation Amber Fox on September 27. Task Force Fox is commanded by German Brig. Gen. Heinz-Georg Keerl. It consists of about 700 troops (mostly from Germany and France), to be augmented, if necessary, by 300 additional NATO troops already in country. The operation’s mandate is for three months, with further extensions to be considered.

On September 29, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) agreed to increase four-fold its monitoring mission in Macedonia to 210 observers. The OSCE mission comprises confidence-building monitors, police advisors, and police trainers. Its current mandate runs until December 31, 2001. In mid-October, the OSCE began a pilot program on resuming Macedonian police patrols in formerly rebel-held territory.

## **Other International Responses**

### **KFOR**

Until August 2001, NATO’s presence in Macedonia had derived from its mandate for the Kosovo Force (KFOR), authorized under U.N. Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999). KFOR currently comprises about 37,000 troops from NATO members and partner countries and is commanded by French Lt. Gen. Marcel Valentin. About 4,000 additional forces have served in the KFOR Headquarters Rear

in Skopje, Macedonia, responsible for KFOR communications and logistics in the area surrounding Kosovo. Several KFOR participating nations in Kosovo also have National Support Elements in Macedonia. Kosovo's border with Macedonia runs about 220 km, or 130 miles. The United States and Germany command KFOR sectors (Multinational Brigades East and South) that share the Kosovo-Macedonian border.

In response to the conflict in Macedonia in early 2001, NATO initially took limited steps to try to quell the violence. The alliance sent military advisors to assist the Macedonian government respond to the rebel attacks. In March, KFOR began to increase force levels along the border and intensify border patrolling to detain suspected rebels and their weapons. KFOR forces have detained about 800 suspected rebels since June. KFOR has reinforced its forces at the border area with a peacekeeping reserve of about 300 British and Norwegian infantry troops (dubbed Task Force Viking). The NAC also endorsed the need for additional troops to be supplied to KFOR, about two extra battalions (about 1,400 troops). NATO increased its liaison presence in Skopje and appointed German Ambassador Hans-Joerg Eiff to be NATO's senior representative in Macedonia. Through its cooperation and coordination cell in Skopje, NATO coordinates alliance and direct bilateral military assistance to Macedonia. NATO political envoy Pieter Feith has played a critical role in negotiating cease-fire agreements in Macedonia.

Until plans got underway for Operation Essential Harvest, NATO resisted calls for military intervention in the conflict. NATO SACEUR Gen. Ralston testified before Congress on March 21 that any additional troops should go toward the KFOR mission, not a new Macedonia mission. Gen. Ralston advised against an expansion of the KFOR mission into Macedonia. He pointed out that the Kosovo-Macedonia border, by virtue of its mountainous terrain, could not be sealed off completely. He also noted alliance concerns about the security of KFOR's main supply route through Macedonia. The Macedonian government's position on NATO involvement focused on NATO's role in stopping the infiltration of rebels and arms from Kosovo, rather than deployment in Macedonia. Later, both the Macedonian government and the rebel forces agreed to have NATO assist in implementing plans to demilitarize the rebel forces. In an unanticipated development, about 80 U.S. forces (as part of KFOR) in Macedonia helped escort about 300 armed ethnic Albanian rebels from Aracino on June 25. U.S. defense officials said that the incident did not represent a new mission for U.S. forces serving in KFOR in Macedonia.

In early October, NATO members agreed to consider offering additional armed forces to the Balkans missions to allow the United States to divert some of its troops, if necessary, to the anti-terrorist campaign in Afghanistan.

## **United Nations**

From 1993 to 1999, the United Nations maintained a small military presence in Macedonia of peacekeeping troops under a conflict prevention mandate, the first case of a preventive deployment of U.N. forces prior to an actual conflict. The United States contributed hundreds of U.S. armed forces to the U.N. preventive deployment force for several consecutive years. In early 1999, China vetoed a further extension of the U.N. mandate in Macedonia, in apparent retaliation for Macedonia's recognition of Taiwan, bringing about the end of the U.N. operation in Macedonia.

In March 2001, the Macedonian government appealed to the U.N. Security Council to address the recent conflict. On March 16, the Security Council issued a state that condemned the “continuing extremist violence” and called it a “threat to the stability and security of the entire region.” Without making an explicit reference to Kosovo, the Council said that the violence was “supported from outside the country.” The U.N. Special Envoy to the Balkans Carl Bildt (of Sweden) expressed extreme alarm at the situation in Macedonia and urged NATO to take action to seal Kosovo’s border with Macedonia.

On March 21, the Security Council passed a resolution (Resolution 1345) condemning the violence and terrorist activities in Macedonia and in southern Serbia. The resolution notes that the violence has been supported externally by ethnic Albanian extremists, but does not name Kosovo as the source of the violence. It also calls on KFOR to further strengthen its efforts to prevent the transfer of arms and personnel across borders and to confiscate weapons within Kosovo.

The Security Council was not expected to consider authorization for the Task Force Harvest mission in Macedonia, since the Macedonian government had requested the deployment and worked out a mutually-acceptable status of forces agreement. The Security Council welcomed the signing of the peace agreement on August 13 and called for its “full and immediate implementation.” It condemned the ongoing violence by extremists.

As debate turned to the possibility of a longer-term NATO military presence in Macedonia, many countries, including some of the European NATO allies, recommended U.N. Security Council authorization for such a force.<sup>18</sup> Others, however, considered Macedonia’s official request to NATO to deploy a small, follow-on force to Macedonia sufficient authorization. Moreover, few countries supported Macedonian President Trajkovski’s proposal to reinstate the earlier U.N. preventive deployment mission to take the place of NATO troops in Macedonia. In addition to requiring new Security Council authorization, such a U.N. force would likely need a lengthy period of time to organize and deploy. On September 26, the same day that NATO approved plans to deploy Operation Amber Fox, the Security Council passed Resolution 1371 on Macedonia. The resolution expressed support for the full and timely implementation of the framework agreement and endorsed the establishment of a multi-national security presence in Macedonia.

## European Union

The European Union has provided Macedonia with humanitarian and economic assistance since the 1999 Kosovo crisis. In 2000, the EU provided about \$26 million in assistance to Macedonia. On March 19, 2001, after meeting with Macedonian Foreign Minister Kerim, EU foreign ministers agreed on a package of measures intended to support the Macedonian government. The measures included assistance for border control and for the promotion of inter-ethnic relations. On April 9, 2001, Macedonia became the first southeast European country to conclude a Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) with the European Union. Part of the EU-led Stability Pact for southeastern Europe process, the EU established the Stabilization

---

<sup>18</sup>Both SFOR in Bosnia and KFOR in Kosovo operate under U.N. mandates.

and Association Agreement in order to promote stronger ties with the EU and to increase assistance to five countries in southeastern Europe, including Macedonia. The EU has designated about \$36 million in assistance for Macedonia for 2001. In September, EU commissioner Chris Patten signed a financial aid agreement with Macedonian totaling about \$39 million.

The European Union has taken a leading role in international diplomatic efforts to promote peace in Macedonia. EU foreign policy high representative Javier Solana and external relations commissioner Chris Patten have made several trips to Skopje since the conflict began, often in tandem with NATO officials. They have endorsed the Macedonian government's measures to counter the Albanian rebel attacks and supported Skopje's position on not entering into talks with the insurgents. After meeting with Macedonian President Trajkovski at an EU summit meeting in Stockholm on March 23, EU leaders expressed solidarity with the Macedonian government, urged continued restraint to prevent an escalation of the conflict, and pledged assistance with border management, refugee support, local government, and judicial reform, including minority rights. All of Macedonia's parties, with the exception of the Party for Democratic Prosperity, met with EU foreign ministers on April 9, in Luxembourg, on the occasion of signing the Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) with the EU. EU foreign ministers welcomed Macedonia's acceptance of a timetable for political reforms under the auspices of the all-party talks under the leadership of President Trajkovski.

In several successive meetings in Skopje, Solana, Patten, and other EU officials pressed Macedonia's political parties to agree to unite in a grand coalition that could facilitate inter-ethnic relations and build a national consensus on European integration issues. On June 25, the EU named Francois Léotard, a former French Defense Minister, to be Special Permanent Envoy for Macedonia. In late October, Leotard was succeeded by French diplomat Alain le Roy. At the June 25, 2001, ministerial meeting in Luxembourg, EU foreign ministers warned that future EU economic assistance to Macedonia would be contingent upon a political settlement to the conflict. The ministers also stated that prospects for Macedonia's integration into the EU would depend on positive results from the political dialogue between the ethnic groups in Macedonia.

On August 13, the EU welcomed the peace agreement signed by the rival Macedonian parties and pledged to organize a donors' conference for Macedonia once the Macedonian assembly approves and implements the accord. The EU set a tentative date of mid-October 2001 for the conference, but conditioned it on parliamentary approval of the constitutional reforms outlined in the framework agreement. On October 4, the EU announced that the planned donors' conference would be postponed indefinitely. Commissioner Chris Patten said it was impossible to raise donor funds to support an agreement that had not yet been approved or implemented.

On September 9, the EU endorsed the option of maintaining a NATO presence in Macedonia beyond the 30-day mandate of Task Force Harvest. The EU rejected a proposal from EU envoy Léotard to launch an EU force to provide security for an international monitoring presence. EU countries are providing most of the international civilian monitors to oversee peace implementation.

## U.S. Policy

The United States has long maintained that stability in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is important for Balkan stability and U.S. interests. The United States recognized the FYROM in early 1994 and established full diplomatic relations following the September 1995 bilateral agreement reached between Greece and Macedonia. The Clinton Administration appointed a special envoy to help resolve the Greek-Macedonian dispute. A U.S. military contingent served in the small U.N. preventive deployment mission in Macedonia from 1993 until early 1999, when the U.N. mission was terminated.

Through bilateral economic and military aid programs and support for multilateral development programs, the United States has supported Macedonia's efforts to restructure and stabilize its economy, strengthen democratic institutions, and integrate into European structures. During a visit to Macedonia in June 1999, President Clinton expressed thanks to the Macedonian government for its response to the Kosovo conflict and support of the NATO mission on its territory. The United States has provided over \$147 million in SEED Act funds to Macedonia through FY2000, not including several millions more in emergency humanitarian aid and security assistance. For FY2001, the United States provided an estimated \$38 million in bilateral SEED Act assistance, and about \$17 million in military aid to Macedonia. This total included designations of \$3.5 million in tactical communications equipment for the Macedonian Army, \$4 million for a military training program, and \$5.5 million in expanded bilateral non-military assistance.<sup>19</sup> For FY2002, the Administration has requested an increase in bilateral SEED Act assistance to Macedonia to about \$45 million, and \$11 million in military assistance. In March, the Administration agreed to supply a unit of U.S. Predator unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) to Skopje to assist NATO in aerial reconnaissance, and to increase intelligence-sharing with the Macedonian government.

On March 23, 2001, President Bush issued a statement strongly condemning the violence by the Albanian extremists and supporting the actions of the Macedonian government. Bush encouraged the government to act with restraint and to work with elected Albanian representatives to address legitimate concerns of the ethnic Albanian community. On April 12, Powell traveled to Macedonia to underscore U.S. support for the government's efforts to resolve the country's differences peacefully. Powell extended to President Trajkovski an invitation from the White House to meet with President Bush on May 2. In Washington, Trajkovski met with President Bush, Secretary Powell, and Defense Secretary Rumsfeld. President Trajkovski requested that the United States designate the NLA a terrorist organization. President Bush announced a \$10 million aid commitment over four years to support the new multilingual university in Tetovo. On May 11, the Bush Administration welcomed the formation of the wider government coalition in Macedonia and urged it to accelerate progress in advancing inter-ethnic reforms. During President Bush's trip to Europe in June 2001, the President consulted on Macedonia with the NATO allies, the European Union, and with Russian President Vladimir Putin. Bush said that the United States and Russia shared the common interest of securing a stable Macedonia.

---

<sup>19</sup>Fact Sheet: U.S. Support for Macedonia, The White House, June 2, 2001.

Bush expressed strong support for the intensified political process underway to achieve greater minority rights in Macedonia.

President Bush welcomed the August 13 signing of the peace agreement but called on the parties to lay down their weapons in order to implement the deal. A White House statement said that “the cease-fire must be respected, the insurgents must disarm and disband, and Macedonia’s Assembly must adopt the necessary constitutional amendments and legislation.” On August 14, the White House reported that President Bush had telephoned President Trajkovski to offer strong support to the Macedonian government as it moves forward to achieve peace.

About half of the border between Kosovo and Macedonia lies in the U.S.-led sector of KFOR. In total, three battalions, or about 5,500 U.S. forces (about 14% of the total), serve in KFOR. In addition, the United States maintains Camp Able Sentry, a logistics unit in Macedonia (formerly with about 500 U.S. armed forces) supporting U.S. forces in KFOR. On July 25, an elite U.S. Marine Corps team was sent to Skopje to enhance security at the U.S. embassy after it came under attack by angry protesters. On July 31, the Pentagon announced that about 200 U.S. military and civilian personnel were being temporarily relocated to Kosovo in view of the security situation in Macedonia.

In June, the Administration reportedly told its allies in NATO that it did not want to contribute U.S. armed forces to a proposed NATO disarmament mission in Macedonia, although it would not object to the creation of such a mission by other countries.<sup>20</sup> On June 27, President Bush said that he would not rule out the possibility that U.S. armed forces might be sent to Macedonia, and that no option was “off the table.” The Administration has said that the United States would participate in the force in ways involving logistics, command and control, communications, and intelligence, largely utilizing U.S. military assets already on the ground in the Balkans.<sup>21</sup> In August, the Pentagon specified that U.S. military personnel and facilities in Kosovo and Macedonia would provide medical, intelligence, and logistical support to the Essential Harvest mission, in addition to their duties as part of KFOR.<sup>22</sup> No U.S. troops have taken part in the weapons collection process, nor have additional U.S. armed forces been sent to the region to assist the Essential Harvest operation or reinforce the existing U.S. presence in the Balkans. U.S. intelligence assessments have reportedly concluded that a continued NATO presence in Macedonia is necessary to avoid a collapse of the peace agreement.<sup>23</sup>

On June 27, President Bush also approved of measures intended to isolate and sanction extremist forces in the Balkans, including members of the NLA. These included the blocking of assets and property of named extremist groups and individuals, and prohibiting U.S. payments to these groups and individuals. The

---

<sup>20</sup>“U.S. doesn’t want to join any NATO mission into Macedonia,” *The New York Times*, June 16, 2001.

<sup>21</sup>Defense Secretary Rumsfeld media availability, July 9, 2001; Department of State daily press briefing, August 2, 2001.

<sup>22</sup>Department of Defense news briefing, August 16, 2001.

<sup>23</sup>*The New York Times*, September 4, 2001.

President also barred from entry into the United States certain individuals responsible for actions that threaten peace and stability in the Balkans.

Following the September 11 terrorist attacks on the United States, U.S. envoy James Pardew said that the United States would remain firmly committed to and focused on the peace process in Macedonia.<sup>24</sup> He said that neither changes in U.S. policy toward Macedonia nor delays in the timetable for the peace process should result from the terrorist assault on the United States. U.S. and other NATO representatives have discounted accounts in the Macedonian press alleging contacts between the NLA and Osama bin Laden. While the Administration has not expressed any plans to withdraw from the Balkans missions, it has requested that the European allies replace any U.S. armed forces that may be diverted from the Balkans to the U.S.-led operation in Afghanistan. Secretary of State Colin Powell reportedly wrote to Macedonian President Boris Trajkovski on November 6 to press for swift passage of the constitutional reforms called for in the framework agreement.

In Congress, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee held a hearing on Macedonia on June 13, 2001. Ambassador James Pardew, Senior Advisor at the State Department, outlined the Administration's strategy with regard to Macedonia. He said that the United States supported President Trajkovski's strategy for peace and the inter-ethnic dialogue on political reforms. The United States would also continue U.S. bilateral assistance to Macedonia to promote inter-ethnic relations and to enhance the capabilities of the Macedonian security forces. Committee Chairman Sen. Biden expressed concern about the United States not taking on a leadership role in the Macedonian conflict. He cited the inability of past European efforts to resolve earlier conflicts in the Balkans.

On March 13, 2001, Representative Bereuter introduced a bill, H.R. 982, on the southern Balkan situation. H.R. 982 would prohibit U.S. assistance for Kosovo unless the President certified that Kosovo residents were not supporting ethnically-motivated violence in Macedonia or in southern Serbia. The resolution was referred to the House Committee on International Relations. On June 22, Senator McConnell introduced S. Res. 115, a resolution encouraging a lasting cease-fire and a political solution to the crisis in Macedonia.

---

<sup>24</sup>Associated Press, September 19, 2001.



Map adapted by CRS from Magellan Geographix.