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Macedonia: Country Background and Recent Conflict

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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.

However, in early 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 was 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 through the summer of 2001, 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 of the conflict. Implementation of the agreement has progressed slowly and with difficulty. Substantial recent progress enabled the holding of a long-delayed international donors' conference on March 12, 2002. In spite of recent achievements, some observers continue to fear the prospect of a new uprising by ethnic Albanian extremists or armed provocations by forces supporting Macedonian hardliners.

In June 2001, NATO formulated and approved plans to launch a limited operation in Macedonia to oversee the disarmament of the ethnic Albanian rebel forces. 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 (nearly 4,000) on September 26, 2001. NATO then deployed a smaller follow-on force (Task Force Fox) 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. The United States maintains some KFOR support forces in Macedonia, but did not contribute forces to either the Task Force Harvest or Task Force Fox missions in Macedonia. In early 2002, the European Union agreed to consider taking over the military mission in Macedonia from NATO.

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Macedonia:¹ 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 2001, 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 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. Negotiations finally reached agreement on key reform issues in early August. The political parties signed a framework 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 has remained in Macedonia to provide security for international civilian monitors overseeing the process of implementing inter-ethnic reforms. Implementation of the framework agreement has progressed slowly, but has moved forward in recent months.

Several factors may have accounted for the emergence in early 2001 of the rebel insurgency in Macedonia. One may have been the increasing radicalism of disparate ethnic Albanian militant groups operating in Kosovo, Serbia, and Macedonia, and

¹This 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.

linked to organized crime and regional smuggling rings. The unresolved status of Kosovo and limited progress in realizing Kosovar self-government since the end of the Kosovar war in mid-1999 may have fueled ethnic Albanian radicalism.² In addition, the international embrace of the post-Milosevic Yugoslav and Serbian leadership after the fall of Milosevic in late 2000 may have discouraged some ethnic Albanians' hopes for Kosovar independence, to which the international community has not agreed. Some ethnic Albanian rebels in Macedonia (as well as in Serbia) may have sought to provoke a heavy-handed response by the Serb or Macedonian forces, in order to elicit Western sympathy and support. Another contributing factor to the Macedonian conflict was the continued activism of 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) after the end of the 1999 conflict in Kosovo. Instead, many former KLA members regrouped in the demilitarized buffer zone around Kosovo and transferred arms and personnel to Macedonia. A border agreement between Macedonia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) in February 2001, intended to tighten border controls, may have also triggered clashes between Macedonian border police and ethnic Albanian smugglers. Finally, underlying inter-ethnic tensions and poor economic conditions (especially among ethnic Albanians) in Macedonia provided fertile ground for a drawn-out conflict.

Political Background

Macedonia is one of six former republics of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.³ Under Yugoslav leader 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.

²U.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.

³Prior 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 Democratic Alternative (DA) party led by Vasil Tupurkovski, and the Democratic Party of Albanians (DPA) led by Arben Xhaferi.⁴ 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.

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% Albanian: 22.9% Turk: 4% Serb: 2% Roma (gypsies): 2.3% other: 0.4% (1994 census)
<i>Religious Groups:</i>	Eastern Orthodox: 67% Muslim: 30% Other: 3%
<i>GDP:</i>	\$9 billion (purchasing power parity, 2000 estimate)
<i>Leadership</i>	
<i>President:</i>	Boris Trajkovski (since 12/99)
<i>Prime Minister:</i>	Ljubco Georgievski (since 11/98)
Sources: <i>Europa World Yearbook 2001; CIA World Factbook 2001.</i>	

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 and managed to remain in power, despite low popularity ratings and numerous political scandals. The opposition, meanwhile, was not able to unify as a governing alternative to the VMRO-DPMNE-led coalition. In May 2001, at the urging of the international community, an all-party coalition replaced the previous government on a temporary basis until early elections could be organized. The next elections will likely be held in September 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. GDP growth, extremely modest in the second half of the last decade, reached nearly 5% in 2000. The 2001 insurgency, however, drove up military spending, expanded the budget deficit, and contracted economic activity, trade, and investment. As a result, GDP declined nearly 4.6% in 2001. Unemployment estimates range from

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

one-third to one-half of the work force. Corruption is considered endemic.⁵ In April 2001, Macedonia became the first southeast European country to conclude a Stabilization and Association Agreement with the European Union. However, the EU repeatedly postponed a planned donors' conference for Macedonia because of Macedonia's lack of progress in implementing political reforms. The conference was finally held in March 2002, during which donor countries pledged over \$500 million in financial and developmental assistance.

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 16,000 active duty soldiers, 60,000 reserves, and 10,000 paramilitary police. It is organized into two infantry brigades and one border guard brigade. The ARM includes a small marine wing and an army air force with a limited number of aircraft and helicopters.⁶ Since early 2001, Ukraine and Bulgaria have served as Macedonia's primary arms suppliers. In addition to the state security structures, other armed groups gained prominence during the 2001 conflict, including the ethnic Albanian National Liberation Army and Albanian National Army. Several Macedonian paramilitary groups also emerged, with some reportedly in close contact with the regular army and police.⁷

Macedonian-Albanian Ethnic Tensions

Prior to the conflict in 2001, relations between the Slav Macedonian majority and ethnic Albanian minority in Macedonia were considered tense, if not explosive. Though not to be compared with the situation in Kosovo under Milosevic's rule, Macedonia nonetheless remained a largely segregated country. Albanians in Macedonia as a whole 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.⁸ Albanians long sought greater representation in the government, armed forces and police. They objected to the preamble of the constitution that made reference to the Macedonian nation, claiming that it thereby relegated Albanians to the status of second-class citizens. They claimed 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 asserted that the Albanian minority enjoyed sufficient rights, comparable to or better than other minority communities in Europe. They remained suspicious of Albanian demands for autonomy, which they feared

⁵"Clean up Macedonia," Gareth Evans, *Wall Street Journal Europe*, March 12, 2002.

⁶*The Military Balance, 2001-2002*, International Institute for Strategic Studies.

⁷*Jane's Intelligence Review*, August 2001.

⁸The Macedonian government agreed, under OSCE mediation, to the establishment of a private university featuring Albanian-language instruction. The South East European University in Tetovo opened in November 2001.

could lead to eventual secession or partition and unification with Albania or Kosovo. Ethnic 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.

2001 Conflict

Conflict Overview

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 included Ali Ahmeti and his uncle, Fazli Veliu, from western Macedonia.⁹ Ahmeti claimed that the

⁹Many ethnic Albanians from Macedonia volunteered to serve with the KLA during the Kosovo conflict. See "The Macedonian Question: Reform or Rebellion," International Crisis (continued...)

rebels' only objective was 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.¹⁰ 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.¹¹

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 expressed sympathy with the rebels' demands for Albanian equity and eventually established contacts with NLA leaders, aware that would lose support among ethnic Albanians if 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.¹² 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 rejected the framework agreement signed by Macedonia's political leaders on August 13 and pledged to continue to fight for a "greater Albania."¹³ Following the terrorist attacks against the United States on September 11, NLA leaders asserted that they had no association with Osama bin Laden or any other radical Islamic movements.

In response to the initial rebel attacks in early 2001, 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 the rebels, whom they called "terrorists." In late March, the Macedonian armed forces began a series of offensives to regain control of rebel-held villages, mainly around Tetovo. At first, the

⁹(...continued)

Group Report 109, April 5, 2001.

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

¹¹*Jane's Defense Weekly*, August 29, 2001.

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

¹³Reuters, August 16, 2001.

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 kidnaping 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, government forces launched another offensive in the north of the country, using long-range attacks on rebel-held villages, but proved 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. 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 period 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 section on Peace Talks, below). On August 7, Macedonian police launched a raid on rebel forces in Skopje, killing five.¹⁴ The police seized a cache of weapons from the rebels and accused them of planning

¹⁴BBC news online, August 7, 2001.

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. On August 19, NLA leader Ali Ahmeti announced that the rebel group would honor the peace accord and agreed to surrender weapons to NATO.

During the half-year conflict, an estimated 250 persons were killed.¹⁵ Many of this number were killed during the final week of peace talks. More than 170,000 persons fled their homes, of which 70,000 fled to Kosovo. Since the start of the implementation phase of the peace agreement, sporadic clashes have broken out, but have not led to resurgence of sustained conflict. By March 2002, about 140,000 refugees and displaced persons had returned to their homes.¹⁶

All-Party Coalition

From the start of the conflict, Western leaders and envoys 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 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

¹⁵“The Other Macedonian Conflict,” European Stability Initiative, February 20, 2002, [www.esiweb.org].

¹⁶United Nations Humanitarian Update, March 2002.

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. The parties agreed to hold early elections in 2002.

Some observers contend that the creation of the all-party government, rather than promoting unity or compromise, instead fostered greater divisions, as the parties looked ahead to the next elections and sought to consolidate their bases of support. Indeed, the Social Democratic Party withdrew from the coalition later in 2001 and political tensions within the government have remained high. Although the NLA never formally joined the governing coalition, former NLA leaders formed a coordinating council with the established ethnic Albanian parties in February 2002.¹⁷ Marking this move toward the political mainstream, former NLA leaders pledged to “maintain the process of consolidation, peace, democratic development, and economic progress.”¹⁸

Peace Talks

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 in Macedonia 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.

¹⁷During the 2001 conflict, however, efforts to bring the NLA into the negotiating process were denounced by the international community. Nevertheless, the ethnic Albanian political parties reportedly remained in close contact with the NLA during the course of the conflict.

¹⁸Reuters, March 5, 2002.

Political talks, relocated to the southern 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.

Ohrid Framework Agreement - Summary

The Ohrid framework agreement was signed by Macedonia's four main political parties on August 13, 2001. The document includes some basic principles of the Macedonian state and provisions on: the cessation of hostilities and the voluntary disarmament of ethnic Albanian armed groups; devolving centralized power to local administration; and reforming minority political and cultural rights. Among other things, the provisions create a "double majority" requirement in parliament (including a majority of representatives from minority populations) for certain constitutional amendments and laws affecting minority rights. Local governments are granted enhanced competencies, including the right to select local heads of police, but with some centralized controls. The agreement names Macedonian to be the official language of the country, but says that any language spoken by 20% of the population is also an official language. State funding for university-level education in minority languages is to be provided where that language is spoken by 20% of the population.

Annexes to the agreement outline fifteen detailed amendments to be made to the constitution and several legislative modifications to be adopted by the national assembly, some within designated deadlines (most of which were not met). Another annex invites the international community to assist in the implementation of the framework agreement, help to train and restructure the police, organize a new census, observe parliamentary elections, and convene a donors' conference.

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.

Peace Agreement - Status of Implementation

Notwithstanding the achievement of reaching agreement on the framework peace document, its swift implementation was considered key to preventing a resumption of violent conflict. Resistance by both sides in the conflict delayed implementation of various aspects of the accords. Western leaders and mediators feared that extremist elements on both sides might encourage a military solution over political reforms. EU envoy Alain le Roy has encouraged Macedonia's political leaders to move beyond the

2001 conflict and focus on the country's substantial economic and development challenges.

On the Macedonian side, the more nationalist political leaders initially accused the West of supporting the Albanian rebel cause and resisted pressure by the international community to move forward in implementing the framework agreement. Prime Minister Georgievski, considered to be among the most hardline and nationalist Slav Macedonian politicians, referred to the peace agreement as "shameful" because it came while the rebels still occupied Macedonian territory. Georgievski also criticized the number of weapons that NATO agreed to collect, calling the disarmament terms "humiliating."¹⁹ 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 believe that the rebels continue to have access to arms. 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, periodically threatened to derail further progress in implementing peace.

Implementation - Key Dates

08/13/01 - Representatives of Macedonia's political parties signed a framework agreement in the lakeside town of Ohrid for the peaceful resolution of the conflict in Macedonia.

09/06/01 - Parliament gave its initial endorsement of the framework agreement, with 91 of 112 members present voting in favor.

11/16/01 - Parliament ratified the constitutional amendments outlined in the framework agreement. Members voted separately for each of the 15 amendments, then followed with a vote on the whole constitution.

- President Trajkovski declared an amnesty for all former ethnic Albanian guerrillas, except those that could be indicted by the U.N. war crimes tribunal. Over the course of the following weeks, 64 of 88 detained ethnic Albanians were pardoned and released.

01/24/02 - Parliament approved a law on local self-government by a vote of 85 in favor, 4 against, and 4 abstaining, devolving many powers to local authorities.

03/07/02 - By a vote of 64 in favor and 12 against, parliament adopted an amnesty law for former ethnic Albanian rebels. The amnesty covered crimes for high treason, armed rebellion, mutiny, and conspiracy against the state. It excluded crimes that could come under UN indictment.

03/12/02 - The European Commission and the World Bank co-sponsored an international donors conference for Macedonia. Donors pledged around \$515 million for financial assistance, reconstruction, and peace implementation efforts.

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

¹⁹*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 launched the next phase of implementation - parliamentary consideration of individual amendments to the constitution and other laws enhancing minority rights. 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 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. In the course of several missions to Macedonia, EU foreign policy chief Solana and NATO Secretary General Robertson pressed Macedonia's political leaders 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. Finally on November 16, the Macedonian parliament adopted the constitutional changes outlined in the framework agreement, voting on each one individually and then the amended constitution as a whole.

Another stumbling block in the peace process was the issue of granting amnesty to former ethnic Albanian rebels. In August, President Trajkovski pledged to grant an amnesty to the insurgents, although this aspect 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, opposed any moves to pardon those they considered to be "terrorists."

In early 2002, international mediators reportedly leaned hard on the Macedonian leadership, warning hardliners against provoking a new crisis and conditioning the offer of international financial assistance on further progress in implementing the framework agreement.²⁰ Macedonia's four main parties agreed to move forward on the adoption of priority laws in order to facilitate the holding of an international donors' conference and to prepare for early elections.

After extensive debate and international mediation, parliament passed (with the necessary two-thirds majority) a law on local self-government on January 24, 2002. The law provides for the devolution of power from the central government to local authorities in the areas of budgeting, planning, education, public services, culture and welfare. Ethnic Albanians dropped their demand to include the right of municipalities to merge with one another, which the Macedonian parties feared could lead to the country's partition. On March 7, 2002, on the eve of an international donors' conference for Macedonia, parliament passed an amnesty law that would pardon persons detained or under investigation for crimes for high treason, armed rebellion,

²⁰Institute for War and Peace Reporting, Balkans Crisis Report No. 313, January 30, 2002.

mutiny, and conspiracy against the state. The law is expected to eliminate charges against several thousand ethnic Albanians. The amnesty does not apply to war crimes that could come under UN indictment. Former NLA leaders welcomed the law for removing a major barrier to the peace process.

Outside of the parliamentary process, international monitors have organized and overseen the phased reintroduction of ethnically-mixed police patrols into former rebel strongholds in an approximately 150-km region. The first phase of the confidence-building plan was launched in December 2001. By March 2002, police units had re-entered 63 of 120 villages.

International Responses

NATO

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 to a “concept of operations” for a NATO mission in 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 assured the Macedonian leader that the proposed operation would be confined in scope to the collection of weapons and would be deployed for a limited duration of time.²¹

On June 29, NATO members gave final approval to the “Essential Harvest” operational plan. The plan conditioned deployment of troops 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. Weeks of continued fighting precluded the possibility of deployment. Following the signing ceremony for the peace agreement on August 13, the alliance deployed 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 contributed forces to the operation, which totaled approximately 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 varied widely on the number of rebel arms to be turned in. The NLA claimed to have about 2,300 weapons; 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

²¹Reuters, June 21, 2001.

integrated structure.²² 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 1st stage of weapons collection, drawing in 1,210 weapons, or more than one-third of the total goal. The 2nd stage began on September 7, after parliament voted to approve the agreement, and the 3rd stage finished on September 26. Task Force Harvest commanders reported that, in total, the mission collected 3,875 weapons in the 30-day period, exceeded targeted amounts. The collection included: 4 tanks/APCs, 17 air defense weapon systems, 161 mortar/anti-tank weapons, 483 machine guns, and 3,210 assault rifles. NATO also collected a total of nearly 400,000 mines, explosives, and ammunition.²³

NLA leaders claimed they had ordered the full disbandment of its forces on September 27. Upon the completion of Operation Essential Harvest, Lord Robertson noted that the Macedonian parliament, unlike NATO, had not kept to its schedule for implementing political reforms.

Operation Amber Fox. 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.”

In the end, a NATO or NATO-led follow-on 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 operation, dubbed “Amber Fox,” on September 26. The mandate for “Task Force Fox” is to provide a monitoring

²²*Jane’s Defense Weekly*, August 29, 2001.

²³[www.afsouth.nato.int]

presence and security for international civilian personnel 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 and comprises some 700 troops from NATO member nations, together with 300 troops already in country (1,000 total). Of these, about 600 troops come from Germany, with the rest from France, Portugal, Spain, Greece, and Poland. The operation's initial mandate ran for three months and was later extended until the end of March 2002. In February 2002, at the request of the Macedonian government, NATO further extended the mandate for Task Force Fox until June 26, 2002. Some NATO officials have expressed concerns about the prospect of transferring command of the Macedonia operation over to the European Union (see section on the European Union, below), unless NATO and the fledgling EU rapid reaction force first reach agreement on institutional and operational links.²⁴

NATO's presence through Operation Amber Fox provides security for the civilian monitoring mission in Macedonia under the auspices of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). OSCE agreed in September 2001 to increase its longstanding monitoring mission in Macedonia to 210 observers. The OSCE mission in Macedonia comprises confidence-building monitors, police advisors, and police trainers. Its current mandate runs until the end of June 2002.

KFOR. Until August 2001, NATO's presence in Macedonia served a supporting role for the NATO mission in neighboring Kosovo, KFOR, authorized under U.N. Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999). KFOR currently comprises a total of 37,000 troops from NATO members and partner countries and is commanded by French Lt. Gen. Marcel Valentin. About 2,200 additional forces serve in the KFOR Headquarters Rear in Skopje, Macedonia, responsible for KFOR communications and logistics in the area surrounding Kosovo.²⁵ 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 several hundred suspected rebels since mid-2001. KFOR reinforced its forces at the border area with a peacekeeping reserve of about 300 British and Norwegian infantry troops (dubbed Task Force Viking). 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

²⁴Disagreement between NATO members Greece and Turkey is currently holding up plans to allow the EU access to NATO's military and planning assets.

²⁵Reuters, March 5, 2002.

political envoy Pieter Feith 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. In March 2001, NATO SACEUR Gen. Ralston testified before Congress that any additional troops being considered for the region 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 early October 2001, 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.

European Union

The European Union has taken a leading role in diplomatic and economic responses to the Macedonian conflict, and may step into a military role as well.

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. The EU established the Stabilization and Association Agreement during the 1999 Kosovo crisis in order to promote stronger regional ties with the EU and to increase assistance to five countries in southeastern Europe, including Macedonia. The EU designated about \$36 million in assistance for Macedonia for 2001. In September, EU commissioner Chris Patten signed a financial aid agreement with Macedonia totaling about \$39 million. The EU has frequently used the promise of foreign assistance as leverage on the Macedonian parties. 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. The EU set a tentative date of mid-October 2001 for the conference, but conditioned it on parliamentary approval and implementation of the constitutional reforms outlined in the framework agreement. The conference was postponed several times and used by EU officials as an inducement to the Macedonian parties to reach agreement on implementing the Ohrid agreement. In response to recent progress, the EU agreed to convene the donors conference on March 12, 2002. Donor countries and

international financial institutions pledged over \$500 million in donor assistance in 2002, exceeding pledging targets. Donor pledges went toward balance of payments assistance, reconstruction and rehabilitation projects, assistance for the implementation of the framework agreement, and development assistance projects.

During the conflict and following the Ohrid agreement, EU foreign policy high representative Javier Solana conducted numerous diplomatic missions to Skopje, alone or with other EU and NATO officials. The achievement at Ohrid has been seen as an important diplomatic success for Solana's office and the EU's common foreign and security policy.²⁶ In addition to Solana, the EU named Francois Léotard, a former French Defense Minister, to be Special Permanent Envoy for Macedonia. Leotard was later succeeded by French diplomat Alain le Roy.

EU leaders have supported extensions of NATO's mandate in Macedonia, but have recently considered the possibility of eventually taking over the Macedonia military mission from the alliance, in the context of the EU's nascent European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP). In February 2002, EU foreign ministers expressed support in principle for such a move. In a March meeting of the European Council, EU leaders said they would be prepared to take responsibility for the NATO operation in Macedonia following elections in Macedonia and at the request of the Macedonian government. The Council called for EU planners to develop options in consultation with NATO, and for permanent arrangements between NATO and the EU on military operations to be in place before final decisions on an EU force for Macedonia are made. France and Spain, which holds the EU presidency until June 2002, are thought to be the strongest supporters of the EU taking over the peace mission in Macedonia. The timing of such a transfer has yet to be determined.

United Nations

From 1993 to 1999, the United Nations maintained a small military peacekeeping presence in Macedonia 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 an end to the U.N. operation in Macedonia.

In March 2001, the Macedonian government appealed to the U.N. Security Council to address Macedonia's internal 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.

²⁶Solana has also had a leading role in negotiating a new political arrangement between Serbia and Montenegro.

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 noted that the violence has been supported externally by ethnic Albanian extremists, but did not name Kosovo as the source of the violence. It also called 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.²⁷ 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.

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 that established normalized relations 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’s mandate expired.

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. In FY 2001, the United States provided over \$180 million in Support for East European Democracy (SEED) Act funds, and several millions more in humanitarian aid and

²⁷Both SFOR in Bosnia and KFOR in Kosovo operate under U.N. mandates.

security assistance. In FY 2002, the United States is providing approximately \$50 million in bilateral SEED Act assistance and \$11 million in military aid. For FY 2003, the Administration has requested \$50 million in SEED Act assistance and \$11 million in military aid.

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. 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. In May, President Trajkovski met with President Bush, Secretary Powell, and Defense Secretary Rumsfeld in Washington. Among other things, President Trajkovski reportedly 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 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 and 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." President Trajkovski made another visit to Washington in February 2002.

About half of the border between Kosovo and Macedonia lies in the U.S.-led sector of KFOR. Currently 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 (with about 500 U.S. armed forces) supporting U.S. forces in KFOR. During the 2001 conflict, the United States augmented security at the U.S. embassy in Skopje. 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.²⁸ 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." Administration officials 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.²⁹ In August, the Pentagon specified that U.S. military personnel and facilities in Kosovo and Macedonia would provide medical, intelligence, and logistical

²⁸"U.S. doesn't want to join any NATO mission into Macedonia," *The New York Times*, June 16, 2001.

²⁹Defense Secretary Rumsfeld media availability, July 9, 2001; Department of State daily press briefing, August 2, 2001.

support to the Essential Harvest mission, in addition to their duties as part of KFOR.³⁰ No U.S. troops took part in the weapons collection process, nor were additional U.S. armed forces sent to the region to assist the Essential Harvest operation or reinforce the existing U.S. presence in the Balkans.

In 2001, President Bush designated several ethnic Albanian groups and their leaders “extremist” for their violent actions that threatened peace and stability in the former Yugoslavia. The Administration approved measures to isolate and sanction extremist forces in the Balkans, including members of the NLA. These included blocking the assets and property of the named extremist groups and individuals, prohibiting U.S. payments to these groups and individuals, and barring their entry into the United States.³¹

Following the September 11 terrorist attacks on the United States, former U.S. Balkans envoy James Pardew said that the United States would remain firmly committed to and focused on the peace process in Macedonia.³² 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. Some analysts assert that the United States has a greater stake in stabilizing Macedonia, given that a prolonged conflict could attract foreign Islamic extremists to the region.³³ At the same time, U.S. and other NATO representatives have generally dismissed Macedonian claims of links between the ethnic Albanian rebels and Osama bin Laden or other Islamic extremist groups. In March 2002, Macedonian police killed seven reportedly Afghan and Middle Eastern men who they claimed were planning to attack the U.S. and other western embassies in Skopje. Also in March, a Macedonian official claimed that Skopje had transferred four terrorism suspects to U.S. custody. However, the government retracted the statement after the United States denied the claim of any handover.

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.

At a March 2002 hearing before the House International Relations Subcommittee on Europe, Assistant Secretary of State Elizabeth Jones said that the United States remained committed to an “in together, out together” policy with the European allies.

³⁰Department of Defense news briefing, August 16, 2001.

³¹Executive Order 13219 (June 26, 2001; December 3, 2001) and Proclamation 7452 (June 26, 2001).

³²Associated Press, September 19, 2001.

³³*The Washington Post*, March 5, 2002.

In the long term, she said that the U.S. strategy for the Balkans was to deal with the region “normally,” through trade and investment and without troops on the ground.³⁴

³⁴Testimony of Assistant Secretary of State Elizabeth Jones, March 13, 2002, available at [<http://usinfo.state.gov>].



Map adapted by CRS from Magellan Geographix.

