

AAF CONTRIBUTION IN PEACE SUPPORT OPERATION BEFORE THE ENTRANCE OF ALBANIA IN NATO

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Abstract

Albania's accession to NATO constitutes a unique history of special relationship. This appears evident when it has been taken in consideration that there is no country in the Alliance that can base its NATO policy on a public opinion consensus exceeding 90 % of the population. Moreover, the history, population, culture, and geo-strategic of position offer a picture of a peculiar country that since the Italian Pelican and Alba operations in the Nineties has become a "security provider" able to contribute worldwide to the major NATO and European Union peacekeeping operations. Few nations experienced the profound transformation accomplished by Albania, while playing a crucial role in supporting Allied efforts to and the humanitarian tragedy in Kosovo and secure peace in region. Albania underwent a unique isolation that ends after 46 in 1991. At that, time a multiparty democratic Parliament was established and Western freedom and values naturally become a common heritage of country ready to resume its role in the international community. In spite of dramatic events the stuck the Western Balkans during the Nineties, Democracy in Albania strengthened its roots and grew quickly, overcoming also some "youthful errors". This historical process required vision, leadership, and an extraordinary commitment on the part of Albanian population. The satellite antennas that doc the Albanian town testify to the longing for free and pluralistic information issuing from a public opinion that since the early Nineties has strongly supported the Euro-Atlantic integration process. Among the countries belonging to the former Eastern bloc, Albania was one of the first to apply for NATO membership. Since it has joined the North Atlantic Cooperation Council in 1992 (renamed Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council in 1997), the Euro-Atlantic integration has always been a major goal of all Albanian Governments and political parties. Looking back, the way paved by Albania toward NATO membership appears impressive: in 1994 Albania expanded its relationship with NATO joining the Partnership for Peace (PfP); during the same year, the Atlantic Council of Albania was established, bringing together the best representatives of the political, diplomatic, military, academic, and economic fields, as well as the new generations. In 1995, Albania developed the first Individual Partnership (IPP) and in 1996 the country entered the Planning and Review Process (PARP). In the same year, Albania forces joined the NATO-led SOFAR peacekeeping force in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Bilateral cooperation with NATO increased progressively in the light of the country's aspirant. In parallel Albania played a crucial role in supporting Allied efforts to end the humanitarian tragedy in Kosovo and in contributing to the stability of the region after the air campaign. On the occasion of the Washington Summit in April 1999, Albania achieved the Membership Action Plan (MAP) and become a NATO aspirant member country together with Croatia and FYR Macedonia. Since 1999, Albania was engaged in 8 MAP cycles and in April 2008 the NATO Head of State and Government meeting in Bucharest invited Albania to start Accession talks with the Alliance. NATO Allies signed protocols on Albania's accession to North Atlantic Treaty on 09 July 2008. The aim of this work is to do a preview of Albanian Armed Forces in contributing to all major NATO and European Union peacekeeping operations, ranging from ISAF to ALTHEA and from Georgia to Iraq.

Keyword: NATO, AAF, role, peacekeeping, contribution

1. INTRODUCTION

Albanian Armed Forces (AAF) since 1996 beside its constitutional mission defending the integrity and territory of Albania has contributed in operation abroad in Peace Support Operations. In this process of growing and development they have done their own evaluation and have learned their lesson so they want to become worthy member of freedom-loving countries¹.

The engagement and contribution of the AAF in operations abroad till now is well appreciated and considerable from all the factors where operate. It is natural to make analytical estimates to the contribution of AAF of the Republic of Albania today and in the future based on the conditions, capabilities, methodology, risks and advantages, benefits and contributions that our country will exchange with the international security structures. Which are the estimates of AAF contribution to the peace during this year and what is their goal in the future? Shortly engagements and contributions so far of AAF in Operations around the globe are as follow;

BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA: Contribution of AAF in Bosnia Herzegovina since 1996 beginning with "IFOR/SFOR" missions, continuing with ALTHEA under EU mandate till 2007. AAF in Bosnia have been operating under the German Armed Forces command with a 23 contingents from platoon to company level with a total number of 1500 troops. AFGHANISTAN: AAF has contributed to the "ISAF" mission led by NATO in Afghanistan since 2002 under Turkish Armed Forces command with a platoon. Since 2005, a medical team composed of 4 medics are taking part in "ISAF" mission in the frame work of "A3", Adriatic Chart. 6TH contingent is ongoing. Since June 2007 under the Italian Army command 2 contingents at company level with 113 PERSONNEL are contributing to the "ISAF" mission in Herat, at the end of the year 2008 the total contribute will be 515 personnel.-IRAQ: In "Iraqi freedom" led by the Coalition of Willing, AAF take part since April 2003 in collaboration with the USA at company level with 123 personnel. The total contribute will be 1150 personnel.

GEORGIA: AAF participates with 3 observes in the UNMIG mission in Georgia under UN. Till now AAF has contributed with 22 personnel. By the end of 2007, Albania contributed with one rotation with a total number of 358 personnel, that make 5.4% of Land Operational Component of JFC, meanwhile the total contribution in international operations since its beginning is evaluated with a total number of 3200 personnel².

2. WHICH WERE SOME OF THE ENGAGEMENTS?

During 2008, Albania has expressed its political will to contribute with additional troops in operations abroad as follows:

ISAF: Contributions in OMLT teams in Afghanistan with NATO countries. Two logistic support officers since December 2008 will be part of an OMLT in Brigade level under the north Regional Command

EUFOR ALTHEA: An EOD team composed of 13 officers, NCOs since April are conducting their mission under the EU in Bosnia & Herzegovina.

CHAD: Since July, 63 offices, NCOs and Professional solders are conducting their mission in CHAD.

IRAQI FREEDOM: Another contingent at company level joined "Iraqi Freedom" mission in September this year.

ACTIVE ENDEAVOUR: Participation with personnel in the NATO operation "Active Endeavour" in Mediterranean Sea.

HNS CC: Building of the HNS Coordinator Centre. The participation with troops in one rotation increases from 358 personnel in 2007 in 486 personnel in 2008. Comparing with some other NATO members or aspirants to join this organization, our contribution is significant. Thus the participation in NATO, UN and the coalition anti - terror in Iraq (Croatia doesn't participate) for one rotation in year 2007 was: FYROM with 202 troops, Croatia with 366 troops, Czech Republic with 1244 troops and Romania 416 troops .Then it was the tendency of international operations are based on EBAO which is tuned in "3D concept" (Deface, Diplomacy and Development), which means that parallel to the military force, an international operation will not have success if they are not accompanied with efforts to develop the capacities of economic growth of one particular country, to be in condition to be managed by the governmental and local authorities, thus the combination of diplomatic, military, infrastructure, medical, financial contributions etc. This concept is expressed to day in ISAF mission in the form of PRT and OMLT, where countries like USA, UK, Italy, Germany, Spain etc., are contributing diplomatic and military contributions with development projects and

¹ Atlantic Council of Albania - Atlantic Treaty Association. *On the way to the full membership of Albania in NATO and beyond... Challenge*

² Comitato Atlantico - Atlantic Treaty Association. *Le nuove dimensioni della sicurezza Atlantica. The new dimensions of Atlantic security.* Adncronos December 1997, Roma

training capacities. In this contest some of the lessons learned from the participation with troops abroad³.

- Albania has offered only military contribution from the AAF; meanwhile NATO countries have integrated military, diplomatic, reconstruction, financial investments contributions etc.

- Number of participations was considerable.

Our country has an acceptable participation in proportion with the population number, economical possibilities and the military capacity as that we have. With the engagement of the contingent in Herat, Afghanistan, Bosnia & Herzegovina and CHAD the balance of participations in NATO, UN, EU and coalition is totally acceptable and in accordance with the national objectives of NATO integration.

- The participation in PSO missions has an impact on the improvement of the operational capacities of units – around 3500 military personnel have participated in international operations. The international operations have influenced in the development of a professional force certified in missions.

- Needs for logistic support, strategic transport etc., which till now is provided from bilateral agreements with partners (Germany, USA, Turkey, Italy, France).

- The absence of a mechanism for "lessons learned" which means that the problems faced by our troops during the conduction of the mission to transform the concepts, structures, training, logistic support have to be part of training program at home.

- The rotation of the troops should be done on uncial structures which train and familiarize together, they doesn't have to be forced to be prepared but taking into consideration the full operational capacity of the units.

- It should be done a better reflection on the military training system based on the actual employment in the international operations and implemented on the training program.

- The necessity of better knowing the culture and tradition of the population in which our troops conduct the operation. Knowledge of English language from the participating nations in operation is the priority for the interoperability of the military structures in the operation

- Better redeployment training, knowing the tasks, terrain of the operation area.

- Developing the interoperable capacities, unification of assets, technologies and procedures of the participating countries in operation and eliminating as much as possible the national Caveats in the mission. Based on the experience, lessons learned from up to day participation and the perspective of future engagements national and international operations, AAF should consider the following:

- Contribution for the development of the national elements from all the fields for the international contributes in the framework of NATO/EU/UN, or other coalitions. This means that Albania in the future will contribute in international operations not only with military capacity but also with other capacity such as diplomatic, medical, police and realizing small construction projects etc.

- Another priority was to have the needed operational capabilities in place to react rapidly, effectively and proportionally against different asymmetric canaries in country. This will be done in accordance with the different scenarios of the AAF missions in Albanian territory⁴. The operational capacity in interrelation to international operations with the national ones to face the unsuspected situations to have a rapport of 1 to 4 till 1 to 5, (8% with 40%) to have the possibility to have enough troops for the international operations and to respond quickly in case of national emergency situations⁵.

- The approval of the policy of force generation process - in a list of tasks based on the concept who does what and how – which considers all the fazes from the willpower of political side, decision making process, sending a reconnaissance team in the operations area to other all the facts need, negotiations till the composition of the MOU/TA with NATO-s, EU, UN or Allies, preparation of the contingents before deploying to the theatre till the information system for lessons learned.

- In the frame of the international engagements, Albania will continue to work on having "Grouping of Forces". In this contest is needed that a part of the units declared to "NATO Pool of Forces" to be declared also in the EU mechanism, because this favors the medium-term goal of Albania to be integrated into EU.

- Evaluating the real capabilities of the AAF to take part in different missions focusing on the development of small capacities at company level, EOD, Medical team, MP, OMLT, PRT etc.

Also this capacities must be developed further and to be certified IAW OCC E&F programme and CREVAL to be fully capable and interoperable with NATO troops and partners in the operations theatre.

- It is a necessity that for a part of the international operations especially the ones that require specialized teams and instructors, to be kept into the consideration the retired personnel from the AAF, to be in the

³ Balenbois, Anne-Marie. "Tell me about NATO". Collection du citoyen. Nane Éditions, July 2004, Paris

⁴ Leci, Elmaz. *NATO dhe Shqipëria*. Koha 1999, Tirane

⁵ NATO HANDBOOK 2001. NATO Office of Information and Press 1110 Brussels – Belgium

inventory in the "Electronic Data - Roster" of MOD, especially the personnel that has served before, that has experience and wishes to be organized in this cases.

- Participation forces on the operations abroad must be from all the AF and not only from limited unit. Looking the spectrum and the nature of today's international operations it is needed to activate beside JFC the capacities of to other commands. Their focus must be in finding out the small capabilities that can be sent to NATO, EU etc, like EOD Platoon, medical Teams, Training Teams, MP etc.

- Evaluation of the best experiences, lessons learned and also the failure of the "New NATO Members", in order to be prepared to get responsibilities for all the engagements for the "accession talks" period till the full integration in NATO⁶.

- Having a dynamic system for the lessons learned system from international operations, the experience of every contingent to transform the concepts, structures, systems and programs, training programs, standard operating procedures for the units participating in this operations, according to development of the "Force we need not to the force we want"⁷. Since 1996, Albanian Armed Forces, together with the mission of defense of territorial integrity of the country constitutional mission, have been engaged in various contributions to peace support operations. This active engagement in international operation is constantly appreciated by all international factors we are together in operations. With the NATO integration, and later on EU integration, it is natural that the engagements and contributions to international operations will not be any longer based upon voluntary basis of a partner country, but based upon the obligation as a member country of the Alliance, and based also upon the situations, possibilities, methodology, risks and advantages, benefits and contributions that our country, will share and exchange with international security and defense structures. What is the contribution so far of units of Albanian Armed Forces in international missions and what are the potential plans for the future as a member country? In a snapshot, we can say that the engagement and the contribution of AAF have grown in quantity and the performance has increased in quality.

We have been present from 1996 to 2007, for 11 years with no interruption in Bosnia & Herzegovina, in NATO-led SFOR and IFOR, and EU-led ALTHEA operation, with 23 contingents all together and with a total number of 1500 personnel. We now continue to be engaged with an EOD team B&H. We have been and still are presents in "ISAF" NATO-led mission in Afghanistan since 2002 with 12 contingents in platoon level, and from 2005 we with 6 contingents under the US A3 Adriatic Charter Initiative with a joint medical team, and since June 2007 we are engaged with 3 contingents each of them with 113 personnel in Herat; with a total of 515 personnel by the end of 2007. Albania has been and still is present since April 2003 in "Iraqi Freedom, mission of the Coalition of Willing with the 12 contingents, and with a total number of 1150 personnel⁸. The same, it has been active and contributive to the UN mission in Georgia UNOMING with 3 observers at a time with a total number of 28 personnel so far. AAF is also present in NATO HQ in Brussels, in NATO Partner Staff Elements (PSE), and in NATO Strategic Commands with 18 personnel altogether.

In addition, AAF have liaison officers, boarding officers, exchange of information level of cooperation, boarding license and other facilities in support of "Active Endeavour" operation in Mediterranean under NATO Article 5 mission. Approximate calculations of the total personnel in international missions is some 355 personnel at a time or almost 6% of the operational component of the land component of the Joint Force command simultaneously (JFC), while the total participation from the very beginning in 1996 to the end of 2007 is estimated to 3200 personnel. What are the international engagements being conducted in 2008 and some other commitments expected to happen until the end of 2008 and early 2009? Since August 2008, another additional contingent of 95 personnel started the new mission in Iraqi Freedom and ended by the end of 2008; from July 2008 another contingent of 63 military personnel initiated the new EU-led mission in Chad; starting from April 2008 a specialized EOD team started a new mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina with a contingent of 13 personnel under the EU mission "Althea"; another engagement is expected as soon as arrangements are made in ISAF Afghanistan in the format of the participation in the operational mentoring and liaison teams (OMLT), as well as a training mission with training experts is expected to start early 2009 under the NATO Training Mission in Iraq (NTM).

Another commitment in the country is the establishment of Coordination Center of Host Nation Support (HNS Coordination Center) by the end of 2009 in order to complete the basic requirements of logistic and infrastructure capabilities in the country in support of NATO operations in Albanian territory under the collective defense or troop transiting through Albanian territory. What mentioned above shows that from a total of 355 personnel in international operations in 2002 AAF reached a total of some 450 military personnel

⁶ <http://www.mod.gov.al/>

⁷ Second Round of Accession Talks. 09 May 2008, Brussels

⁸ Luciolli, Fabrizio W. *Albania and NATO. Secretary of the Italian Atlantic Committee*; 13 International Conference of the Albanian Atlantic Council. 20 March 2009, Tirane

in 2008. Comparing the participation in international operations with other NATO or aspirant countries, our national contribution is considerable and significant⁹.

There are indications of simultaneous participation of some other countries in NATO/ EU/ UN/ Coalitions-led operations for comparative effects in 2007 respectively Macedonia with 202 military personnel, Croatia with 366 personnel, Lithuania with 289 military personnel, Estonia with 267 personnel, Bulgaria with 570, Czech Republic with 1244, Romania with 1416, US with some 240000 military personnel, etc. Participation of AAF in international operations has a considerable cost. Future plans and engagements show that it will further grow in the coming years under the NATO country status¹⁰. The figures of 355 personnel at a time in international operations end missions for 2007, and additional participation in 2008 with a total of total of simultaneous participation of 450 personnel will continue to potentially grow up in the coming years. Below there is the perspective of the planned maximal level of ambition in international operations of AAF which goes to some 1000 people in 2014, if required, based upon the commitments of Force Goals, (level of ambition of FG L 0035). Together with numbers of participation of Albanian military units in international missions, the participation in itself has been a real school of lessons learned throughout the globe in coalition together with allies and partners. Participation in international operations has provided a much more valuable experience for the military units than training events or exercises". They have in themselves the reality, of the missions and the lessons learned from the real life situations¹¹. It is also worth mentioning that the tendencies of current and future international operations, especially those NATO/ EU/ UN-led will be based on the Effect Based Operation Concept (EBAO) which is the synthesis of the "3D Concept" (Defense, Diplomacy and Development), which means that together with the military power in an international operations, it cannot be successful if it is not associated with other non-military efforts, such as local and central state capability building for economic development, of the country under operation; that is the combination of diplomatic, economic, military, infrastructure, legal, health, police, finance, etc. This concept is reflected today in ISAF operation in Afghanistan through the functional Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT) and Operational Mentoring Liaison Teams (OMLT), which is supported primarily by countries such as US, UK, Germany, Italy and Spain. Other smaller countries like Norway, Latvia, Croatia and Macedonia¹², etc have their contributions beyond the military forces with development projects and training capabilities¹².

3. SECURITY PROVIDER

With the progress made and the contributions Albania have offered to international operational operations especially during the last decade, we can say that Albania has definitely closed the page of the history of the country when it was a Security Consumer and it is now, a Security Provider. However, under the perspective of current and future operations, with no question on the significant international contributions Albania have made so far, it would be reasonable to draw some lessons from previous and current operations. These lessons should be realistically analyzed in order to serve advance planning for future operations and face successfully the future challenges of full integration. These challenges of participation in international operations should be at the center of the attention of the defense planners at all levels.

Starting from 2009 and beyond, MoD policy makers and General Staff experts of national and international operations should focus their attention and keep in mind the following recommendations:

- Albania has offered so far only military capabilities from the Armed Forces, while almost all other NATO countries have integrated their military contributions with other capabilities of diplomatic, police, economic development, financial investments, etc. A concept of coordination of national capabilities in all areas above mentioned for international missions under the framework of NATO/EU/UN or other coalitions, requires that Albania should contribute in the future not only with military units as it has been so far, but also with other national civilian capabilities of diplomatic nature, medical, police and possibly modest infrastructures development projects in a long run, etc. A main priority of this issue should be given to the identification and development of capabilities included in the package of the Force Goals 2008¹³. Increase of numbers in international operations should be done by avoiding potential overstretching of operational units; the expression of political willing is above the real possibilities of AAF.

⁹ Hudhra Thimi, "Assession talks and the way ahead to full NATO-membership". 2008, Tiranë

¹⁰ <http://www.balkanweb.com>

¹¹ <http://www.mfa.gov.al/>

¹² Simon, Jeffrey. *Number 58: "NATO'S Membership Action Plan (MAP) And Prospects for the Next Round of Enlargement"*. November 2000

Annual National Programme of the Republic of Albania to NATO Membership 2008/2009 - publication of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Second Round of Accession Talks. 09 May 2008, Brussels

Albania has a very acceptable participation in size compared with the size of population, economic development and military capabilities available for defense of the country.. Albania has adopted the concept of "A Single Set of Forces" for participation in international operations; that means that Albania will not have specific forces for NATO-led operations, and other specific forces for or EU, UN and Coalition led operations. Albania will develop a single set of forces to be used when required by all international organizations. With the engagements of 2008 of the contingents, participating in Herat, ISAF Afghanistan, the contingent of EOD in B&H and participation in EU led operation in Chad, as well as an additional company in Iraq to be completed by the end of 2008, the balance of participation in international operation for 2008 is at the highest level possible, and in accordance with national NATO integration objectives.

The priorities of forces for simultaneous participation in international and those in the country for potential eventualities should be rated to 1 to 3 until 1 to 5, (8-10% with 40-50%) to be ready to force international rotations and to promptly react with credible forces to any national emergency situations.

- Participation in international operations should orient the efforts of modernization of the armed forces units with equipment and systems interoperable with the allied countries to conduct operations in difficult terrain and extreme weather conditions.

The aim of current and future operations is the conduct of operations far away from peace time locations and national territories; so the target is that long distant deployment of forces and supported and sustained logistically to conduct independent operations for a long period of time. Adoption of this concept requires high cost associated with a substantial change in training, education and employment of forces.- So far the participation in international operations is done with the logistic support and strategic lift of other allied countries on bilateral basis (currently they are made under bilateral cooperation with Germany, Turkey, US, Italy, France, etc.).

Worth mentioning that with NATO membership, based on NATO policy and concept of operations, the logistic support of the forces in mission is a full national responsibility. A very positive example of this concept we have adapted is the case of the EOD team that Albania have in Bosnia & Herzegovina, which is fully, supported by our country. Thought modest in participation, this EOD unit shows the adoption of NATO concept by Albania.

The cost of logistic support and strategic lift, and other cost under the concept of national responsibility will make that Albania from the current cost of 5, 4% of the defense budget in international operations for 2007, could spend in the maximal worst case scenario in international operations some 15-20% of the total defense budget in 2014.- Participation of Albanian units in international missions has given a direct impact on the increase of their operational capabilities; more than 3500 military have participated to far international operations. All international operations have positively influenced on the development of a professional force certified in real missions. This participation of forces in current and expected range of operations will give a real motion to the transformation of the training and educations system in AAF, and should at the same time be reflected in the training and education curricula and programs of the officers, NCO-s, professional soldiers and civilians of Defence University, Defence Academy, NCO Academy, Troop School, Basic Training Brigade and all other units of AAF.- Lack of a mechanism of "lessons learned", which means that all the problems the contingents encounter in any rotation of operations should serve the transformation process for the improvement of operational capabilities. It is imperative to develop such a system in the Armed Forces based upon national and international operations, where the experience of each contingent in mission is considered as a key for change of Albania concepts, organization, equipment, training and education programs, and standard operation procedures for the unit participating in these missions, based upon the message of "the force we really need instead of the force we might desire"

.- Approval of a policy at the strategic level regarding force generation process for participation in a international mission that is the identification of a list of tasks and obligations of national institutions based on the concept "who does what" when an in cooperation with whom" - which considers all the phases from the expression of political will to participate in an international operation, decision making authority and procedures, fact finding team at the theatre of operations, negotiations and establishment of Memorandum of Understanding/ Technical Agreements with NATO, EU, UN or specific Allies, identification of personnel, security and safety measures national training of contingents before deployment, and establishment of a command and control, information and lessons learned scheme when in operation, etc.- Assessment of AAF capabilities for different missions and the development of special "niche" capabilities at less than company level of EOD, MP, OMLT, PRT etc, as above mentioned, based on the package of FG.

After identification, these capabilities should be developed under mid and long defense planning procedures, and then certified based on the OCC E&F program and later on CREVAL, MAREVAL and TACEVAL evaluation system in order to be capable of being interoperable with Allied forces in the theatres of operations.

It is necessary that for international operations, for training and mentoring missions.- Participating forces in international missions should be from almost all the units of AAF and not only from some traditional units. Also, the rotations of units should be done based on compact units/ subunits and not based on fragmentation of several units, which might result in a lower performance of the “esprit de corps” of the units, etc. Main goal of the unit commanders when they provide units for operations is the operational capability of the units they provide and not only the numbers for the coming contingents. In addition to the Joint Force Command, which has covered so far the full spectrum of participation in international operations, given the new nature and forms of participation in future operations, it is necessary to develop and provide capabilities from the two other commands. Their focus should be to identify their specialized niche capabilities required for current and future operation by NATO/ EU/UN operations, such as EOD, medical, training and mentoring, Military Police teams.

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