

Kosovo's Security Transition

A Critical Study into the Establishment of the Kosovo Security Force

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Twelve months on, the statue commissioned to mark the declaration of independence on 17 February 2008, remained relevant for the Kosovo Security Force.

Context

This is the second paper which analyses the transition in Kosovo's security sector during the winter 2008/09 when the Kosovo Protection Corps (KPC) was deactivated and the new Kosovo Security Force (KSF) was stood up. The first paper, also published by the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, critically studied the de-activation of the KPC.¹ The two activities were so connected that a second paper, studying the standing up of the KSF, was necessary to provide the reader with a full picture of what took place.

Reporting to the Commander of Kosovo Force (COMKFOR) in Pristina, the UK liaison officer post existed to provide the eyes and ears for the NATO-led mission in Kosovo and to provide the essential linkage between the two organisations and other stakeholders at the highest level. The author spent 6 months embedded with the KPC commander and deputy commander during the final months before the standing up of the KSF. The views expressed here are his own and do not in any way reflect UK or NATO positions.

The author was a key member of the KPC leadership team that worked to deactivate the KPC whilst simultaneously setting the conditions for the stand up of the KSF, under the direction and supervision of KFOR. The two events were inextricably linked; without a successful de-activation there would be considerable risk to the KSF project. As the first paper explained, the de-activation of the KPC was not as smooth a process as had been expected and this had a detrimental impact on the stand up of the KSF. Additional external pressures stemming from long-standing personal grievances, clan-based influence and political intervention were also significant distractions.

This paper has been written assuming some prior knowledge by the reader of the Kosovo situation although it is recommended to read the first paper in this series. Locked into the framework of NATO's New Tasks², this paper's purpose is to critically analyse how Kosovo's principal civil emergency organisation transitioned into the newest uniformed organisation in the Balkans. The KSF concept though was not universally welcomed; Serbian Foreign Minister Vuk Jeremic branded the KSF "an illegal paramilitary group" whose creation was "totally unacceptable". Speaking on B92 television during a visit to Ljubljana in January 2009, Jeremic said the "force is a direct threat to national security, peace and stability in the entire region".³

Language was a problem for many organisations. The word transition is used in this paper although a relationship between the KPC and the KSF did not exist for policy makers in NATO. In fact, the word transformation was banned by NATO

¹ "The Kosovo Protection Corps: a critical study of its de-activation as a transition" dated 21 Jan 10:

<http://english.nupi.no/Publications/Books-and-reports/2010/The-Kosovo-Protection-Corps.-A-Critical-Study-of-its-De-activation-as-a-Transition>

² The first task described the establishment of the new Ministry for the KSF (MKSF); the second task was focused on establishing the KSF and the third task directed the supervised dissolution of the KPC by KFOR.

³ Google News, dated 21 Jan 2009:
http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5hFUhM_dkT5VtQbsmvcICbBGZDF9Q

and KFOR staff in an attempt to create the impression of a new force unconnected to the KPC. This policy was pursued to emphasize that, having completed its mission, the KPC was to be deactivated and a new multi-ethnic Security Force was to be created. However it is viewed though, the two organisations were inextricably linked by its people and it is this transition that is described here. And although concurrent work to establish the Ministry for the KSF (MKSF) was arguably integral to the creation of the KSF, only passing reference will be made to it here.

The author had unique access to all aspects of planning for the KSF, and subsequently after it was stood up. The tensions that existed between the key stakeholders often inhibited progress. At times, the paper is critical of the way that situations were handled or how they were allowed to unfold. The paper will include real examples to highlight these tensions. However, the paper has not been written to undermine organisations or to infer criticism of individuals, but to identify lessons that can be learned from this highly complicated process. Only the most flawed organisation will assume its performance to be flawless.

This paper therefore aims to give the reader a balanced view of how the NATO-led mission in Kosovo eventually stood up the Kosovo Security Force at one minute past midnight on 21 January 2009. It is hoped that lessons learned from Kosovo will help those engaged in planning security transitions in post conflict environments in the future.

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<http://mne.oslo.mil.no>

Introduction

When the UN Secretary General wrote to the President of the Security Council in New York, Ban Ki Moon expressed his support for the report by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Kosovo's future status, Martti Ahtisaari, with the following words,

“Having taken into account the developments in the process designed to determine Kosovo's future status, I fully support both the recommendation made by my Special Envoy in his report on Kosovo's future status and the Comprehensive Proposal for the Kosovo Status Settlement.”⁴

For the NATO-led mission in Kosovo operating under UNSCR 1244⁵ Kosovo Force (KFOR), the published Ahtisaari Plan⁶ was the precursor for a small NATO team to begin to implement the obligations set out in the Settlement document. Describing the first of the three New Tasks, the Ahtisaari Plan stated,

“A new professional and multiethnic Kosovo Security Force shall be established within one year after the end of the 120-day transition period envisaged in the Settlement. It shall have a maximum of 2,500 active members and 800 reserve members.”

This would be administered by a civilian-led MKSF⁷ – the creation of which was another of the New Tasks (the third was KPC dissolution). The Unilateral Declaration of Independence by the Government of Kosovo on 17 February 2008 effectively set in train the detail contained within the Settlement Document. The end of the 120 day transitional period⁸ was followed by Kosovo's Constitution coming into

⁴ Report of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Kosovo's future status, Martti Ahtisaari, dated 26 March 2007: <http://www.unosek.org/docref/report-english.pdf>

⁵ S/RES/1244 (1999), dated 10 June 1999: <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N99/172/89/PDF/N9917289.pdf?OpenElement>

⁶ In November 2005, the Secretary-General appointed Former Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari as his Special Envoy for the future status process for Kosovo.

⁷ NATO is responsible for supervising and supporting the stand-up and training of a multi-ethnic, professional and civilian controlled KSF. The ministry for the KSF is a civilian-led organization that exercises civilian control over the KSF. The minister for the KSF, through his ministry, exercises day-to-day responsibility for the KSF. NATO, dated 10 Nov 10: http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_48818.htm

⁸ That transition period should be used to accumulate statements of recognition of the conditionally independent state from as many governments as possible. ICG, dated 21 Aug 07: <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/europe/balkans/kosovo/185-breaking-the-kosovo-stalemate-europes-responsibility.aspx>

effect on 15 Jun 08. This triggered a 12 month period in which to dissolve the KPC (and stand up the KSF).

Preliminary NATO planning began in Joint Force Command Naples in late 2007 and was later transferred to a new organisation, the Military Civilian Advisory Division (MCAD), under command of the KFOR Commander, co-located with KFOR HQ but in a separate building. This work was endorsed formally by the North Atlantic Council in June 2008. When the NATO Secretary General spoke to the media following that meeting,⁹ he confirmed that the KPC had to be dissolved by 15 June 2009 with the KSF stood up by the same date. The foundation for what was clearly a complicated series of tasks was hampered by the language used by the NATO SG during that press conference as the first paper summarised,¹⁰ “The IMP,¹¹ in consultation with the ICR and Kosovo... [will]... supervise and support the stand up and training of a civilian-controlled Kosovo Security Force, KSF.”¹²

Even though KFOR was given the direction to implement this New Task, it was never fully supported by all contributing nations on the ground in Kosovo, which became apparent in their commitment towards building a successful KSF. The New Tasks for KFOR was a problem from the start; a lack of resources to support the MCAD was unhelpful and KFOR’s focus on providing a “safe and secure environment” in accordance with the extant NATO mandate ensured the New Tasks became an inconvenient distraction. The implications of UNSCR 1244 provided the political top cover for contributing nations to support the KPC; its trust fund, established by NATO to support a comprehensive resettlement programme for KPC personnel was fully supported by the International Community (IC). By contrast, the KSF struggled to gain international support and recognition, reflecting Kosovo’s political limbo; consequently the NATO Trust Fund established for the KSF attracted little backing. Contributing countries seemed to be more willing to support the dissolution of a uniformed entity in the Balkans than to assist in the creation of a new security force. However, reflecting a *real politik* approach to Kosovo, some individual countries did make significant contributions to the KSF; unconstrained by Kosovo’s unique status, Germany gifted¹³ military

⁹ NATO Press Conference with Secretary General 12 June 2008:

http://www.nato.int/cps/en/SID-3253B702-5E536D28/natolive/opinions_7852.htm?selectedLocale=en

¹⁰ Page 7, “The Kosovo Protection Corps: a critical study of its de-activation as a transition”

¹¹ KFOR was referred to as the International Military Presence in early UN documents.

¹² NATO Press Conference with Secretary General 12 June 2008:

http://www.nato.int/cps/en/SID-3253B702-5E536D28/natolive/opinions_7852.htm?selectedLocale=en

¹³ The term “gifting” refers to the generic process of Governments giving military equipment to (generally) emerging nations, either through purchases from third party manufacturers or existing military stock (e.g. the German and US contributions in this example).

vehicles and the US provided uniforms. However, even with weeks to go before the KSF was stood up, the KSF Trust Fund was millions of Euros short of its target amount.

It is with this backdrop that the paper's first chapter will scrutinise the plan that was adopted by the MCAD in order for the KSF to be stood up by 5 January 2009. It will study the Recruiting, Screening and Selection (RSS) process to set the context for the remainder of the transition. It is important to understand what the implications of the time-frame were; the pressure to meet the 5 January deadline was significant for the small multi-national staff manning MCAD.

The next chapter will continue to set the scene with the detail of how the internal recruiting plan was to be implemented. In broad terms the chapter will study the challenges that faced MCAD; focusing on the degree of coordination involved in implementing the plan. The paper will then turn to the political context. This chapter outlines the situation that developed when an unforeseen political intervention resulted in a delay to the COMKFOR-authorized timeline. This created a number of short term consequences for MCAD and the KPC senior leadership, which will be explored later in the paper. The next two chapters will assess the build up to Announcement Day,¹⁴ known as A Day, and its aftermath, which will look closely at the fallout from the process and consider why mistakes were made.

Finally, the paper will bring together the key lessons that can be learned from the standing up of the KSF. The first paper found that there were three significant areas that could be highlighted for future transitions: the critical need for a robust communications plan; the need to understand the role played by culture within the country; and the precondition of clear lines of responsibility between all the main stakeholders, coupled with strong leadership. These issues were recurring themes during the stand up of the KSF but there were also other fundamental examples of where events did not go as well as planned. The conclusion will serve to draw a line underneath the difficult, testing but ultimately successful process of transitioning Kosovo's security architecture.

¹⁴ The day on which the KSF was created was called Announcement Day (A Day) when all successful applicants from the KPC would learn whether they had been selected for the KSF or not.

Recruiting, screening and selection – the plan

The KSF was conceived as a lightly armed, multi ethnic, all volunteer force consisting of 2500 full time personnel with a reserve of 800. Although it was to be a new organisation, the political and practical realities determined that at least half of the KSF personnel would come initially from the KPC, which was approximately 2800 strong. The internal recruiting plan needed to identify the first tranche of approximately 1400 personnel, assuming they met the entry criteria. Kosovo-wide recruitment would then commence on the day the KSF stood up, which would represent its “new blood”. This paper will only look at the internal recruiting activity. NATO’s team in Pristina, the MCAD, had to come up with a credible plan. After considering various options throughout 2008, the decision was finally taken in September to deactivate the KPC at midnight on 4 January 2009 and stand up the KSF at one minute past midnight on 5 January 2009. This did not leave much time for what needed to be done. The plan was effectively split into three distinct phases.

The first phase was to ensure all KPC personnel who met the criteria were given the opportunity to apply for service in the KSF. Teams from MCAD were to be dispatched to all KPC locations across the country over several weeks in order to assist personnel with this task. Based on information supplied by the KPC Personnel Department, the MCAD prepared all the necessary documentation. Having provided advanced warning of their schedule, teams would leave early every morning, together with interpreters, in order to process applications.

The second phase was to invite all those who had applied to join the KSF to attend a “NATO standards”¹⁵ selection test at Ferizaj. The term “NATO Standards” was used to reassure the IC, members of the KPC and the wider public, that these standards would be rigorously applied to selection and subsequent training. In reality, NATO had to be flexible over certain criteria (for example dental standards were never applied). Ferizaj was a KPC location 45 minutes south of Pristina and had been identified as the location for future KSF training. The selection programme included an intelligence test, an interview in their own language (the range of applicants included all ethnic back-

¹⁵ However the lack of a pro-active communications campaign ensured that inside Kosovo the phrase meant very little.

grounds including Kosovo Serbs) and a physical test involving a run, sit ups and press ups.

Ferizaj would therefore host the Italian-led NATO Training Team responsible for KSF training courses. The plan envisaged that after receiving confirmation that they had been selected for the KSF, personnel had up to 6 weeks to agree to the terms of the contract offered to them. Then, dependent on capacity, all newly selected KSF personnel up to and including Lieutenant Colonel, would be temporarily removed from their assigned post to attend a 4 week training course¹⁶. In preparation for this activity, extensive refurbishment had been taking place at Ferizaj, which included building a running track for the physical test. Unfortunately even with weeks to go before the first group were invited to undergo selection, there were problems with the infrastructure including a lack of fresh water and too few ablutions for the large numbers expected to spend the day on site. These issues, potentially damaging for the image of the KSF, seemed to indicate a lack of urgency in putting all the essential pieces in place before starting the task of training future members of the force¹⁷.

The third and final phase was the selection of personnel. The intricate plan set the selection board for the KSF Commander on the 7 November, the Senior Officers Advisory Board (SOSAB) to select full Colonels and above on 24 November and the remaining selections for officers and other ranks to follow in a cascade fashion thereafter. All members of the KPC who had applied for the KSF were to receive notification by envelope at one of 7 + 3¹⁸ new 'KSF' locations across the country on 12 December 2008 (A Day).

The MCAD received results from the selection tests and also had on file the individual's own application which outlined their preferences for future employment in the KSF (by specialisation) and their current role. This data was loaded into the Excel database and, using a points-based system, each KPC applicant was placed in an order of merit ready for the pre-selection boards which were due to take place in MCAD's headquarters. These pre-selection boards were designed to reduce the field of candidates to a manageable number before the main selection boards. The International Civilian Office (ICO) sent representatives to every session and was integral to the transparency and fairness of the selection procedure. The key to ensuring a meas-

¹⁶ These courses were later run by national training teams from NATO countries under Italian direction. In parallel with the RSS planning, the training teams were busy writing their lesson plans and preparing for the basic training course.

¹⁷ In fact, the decision was taken during the selection activity to move initial training to the Kosovo Police Training Centre at Vustri in the north, close to the unsettled and divided town of Mitrovice.

¹⁸ The +3 was a reference to the need for short term additional capacity to consolidate equipment during for a period of months.

ured and logical selection process was to identify the commander of the KSF first, then select the senior officers followed by the remaining officers and other ranks. It is worth putting this process into context with other activity at that time: the de-activation of the KPC was in full swing; there was growing discontent over the issue of pensions and resettlement; KPC barracks were closing and equipment was being centralised; senior KPC officers were undergoing external training to prepare them for the rigours of organising the KSF (taking them away from their units); and all KPC personnel were being invited to attend selection tests in Ferizaj. It was a complicated and interdependent plan which left no room for the unexpected.

One final element to the selection procedure fell under the “screening” category. The decision was taken that the cost of putting every single KPC applicant through a medical (€50 per person) was prohibitively expensive and so only those *provisionally* selected from the pre-selection boards would be sent to a pre-arranged medical in Obilic. Even this sensible control of finite resources generated unintended consequences for the credibility of the overall process. The medical reports were then sent to MCAD and a KFOR Doctor made a determination on whether the applicant was fit for service in the KSF based on the medical report from Obilic. There was initially some difficulty in finding a KFOR Doctor who would carry out this task because there was a requirement to make a judgement based on a third party assessment. In fact two issues arose: firstly there was concern that some members of the KPC who had well documented poor medical conditions were still receiving medical clearance; and secondly the general consensus was that an invitation for a medical was effectively acceptance into the KSF. This perception within the KPC was allowed to run unchecked by KFOR. Finally, after considerable debate, the decision was taken not to inform an individual if their non selection for the KSF was down to a medical “failure”. This judgement was highly contentious. In addition, the decision not to have a formal appeals procedure for unselected personnel, a decision based on finite resources within MCAD, almost guaranteed that those who were not selected and who had taken a medical would feel aggrieved at not being told the reason for this decision. However, MCAD simply did not have the capacity to meet this anticipated need¹⁹.

As the owner of the establishment of the KSF, what was missing was a KFOR-led, proactive communications plan describing the KSF stand up in the appropriate detail to the media. The Information Operations representative in KFOR lacked any real interest and rarely attended

¹⁹ In fact, the MCAD eventually agreed to a compromise; a telephone number was set up immediately after the selections were announced to answer general questions, although individuals were still not informed about medical results.

relevant meetings. Directed by NATO HQ to be reactive with the media, issues were misunderstood and poorly reported by the Kosovan press from KFOR's perspective. In effect, the KPC membership and the newspapers drew their own conclusions. The medical issue was one example; the fact that KPC personnel were called forward for a medical assessment was not a guarantee of acceptance into the KSF, but this was the conclusion drawn by many of those involved. There was no countering this myth by KFOR. The national media also stirred up unwelcome feelings involving the conditions for resettlement available to KPC personnel not selected for the KSF; in a country with 40% unemployment the message needed help, but none was forthcoming. In short, these major concerns over the stand down of the KPC and the stand up of the KSF were allowed to drift.

Finally, one important detail to address was the security of the former 7+3 KPC locations that would become KSF sites. They were full of equipment and vehicles which needed to be guarded between the period when the KPC personnel were sent home and when they were due to return to work in the KSF; a matter of a few days to re-brand the KSF locations. Even the question of who would provide the guard was divisive. The KPC were firmly of the opinion that KFOR were best placed to act as a deterrent against criminals who may want to steal equipment or damage the barracks. The respect for KFOR by the population was likely to act as a deterrent in itself. However, KFOR saw the picture differently and insisted that, as third responders behind the Kosovo Police and the UN over criminal matters, it was not their responsibility. The KPC leadership could not understand this decision and to them the issue demonstrated KFOR's reluctance to be involved with the KSF. Nevertheless, the KPC devised a plan to provide guards from within its ranks, supported with additional patrolling by the Kosovo Police.

Recruiting, screening and selection – implementation

The sheer volume of personnel expected to apply for the KSF from within the KPC, and the limited time available, resulted in the application process and testing taking place concurrently. The daily visits to KPC locations across Kosovo were on the whole successful; the numbers involved were as high as expected and even though the KPC in some areas had all but ceased work, there was a feeling that the KPC had bought into the concept of the KSF. There was one example of dissatisfaction. The commander of a 25 man unit was opposed to the process and decided to make his feelings known by voicing his concerns to a local newspaper, contravening the KPC Disciplinary Code. He also directed his men not to apply for the KSF. Although no action was taken against him, considerable effort was made to encourage his personnel to change their minds. After hours of personal meetings by a range of people, including a Government advisor, they finally agreed to put their names forward (with the commander's blessing) and their applications were collected. It was late October and way beyond the final deadline for applications but the absence of this unit was important to the integrity of the whole process.

The decision was taken to use a range of relatively uncontroversial criteria during testing, reflecting the limited time available and to provide the NATO staff with a fairly straight forward and objective view of each candidate. There was a determination to ensure the selection procedure was scrupulously fair which in some cases resulted in too little recognition of cultural sensitivities; if anything the process lacked a degree of subjectivity. For example, some members of the KPC had received extended educational opportunities at United States Military facilities, their English was excellent and they were rightly confident of their own abilities. In many ways, these candidates were ideal for the KSF. In fact, they were denied the opportunity to conduct the interview at Ferizaj in English, and had to conduct the interviews through interpreters. The cultural aspect of this scenario can be seen from both sides and is important; the KFOR interviewer, working off a script, wanted to ensure the applicant did not receive an unfair advantage over non English speakers. However, by being so prescriptive, the interviewer denied the candidates the opportunity to demonstrate their skills and ability which, in cultural terms, is precisely what they would want to do (in order to provide them with an advantage). In some cases the candidate's proficiency of English was higher than

the interviewer. There is a counter argument that if NATO standards had been applied rigidly, there would have been far fewer candidates who would have been eligible for the KSF. But the decision was taken to adapt to the circumstances; the point here is that it sometimes didn't go far enough. Taking time to understand the cultural aspects of the population undergoing a transition is vital and, like in the first paper, remains an important lesson learned.

Another incident involved the intelligence tests. Within days of the start of testing, the content of the papers being used in Ferizaj were in circulation around the KPC Protection Zones (PZ). The KPC personnel who had attended in the first couple of days recognised the tests as having been used in previous KFOR training. They were quickly photocopied and passed between potential candidates. The author was handed evidence of this on the second day of testing. Once the fact came to light the tests were replaced. The repercussions were minimised because of the swift action taken by MCAD. The fact that the KPC leadership raised the problem was evidence of their willingness to do things right; this was based on their desire to meet "NATO standards" of behaviour.

As results were accumulated in MCAD headquarters the challenge to place applicants in an order of merit, balancing their wishes against the needs of the KSF was difficult. With looming deadlines, and a constant ebb and flow of results from Ferizaj and from the medical board, managing the process became a risk in itself. The results were continually input onto a single database. In addition, there was a lack of subjectivity evident in the selection criteria. In a mature military organisation, annual reports provide evidence of performance, potential and offer an excellent tool for personnel management. The KPC's early practice of writing annual reports on its personnel had become unreliable over the years. As a consequence there was no additional means against which to judge KSF applicants beyond the objective test results and the personal data contained in each candidate's application. A suggestion was made to ask PZ Commanders to write reports on each of their personnel on one page, commenting on their suitability to join the KSF and highlighting any major reservations, such as bad attendance or a poor disciplinary record. And they were asked to do this against very tight deadlines. The idea did not initially go down well within MCAD. The feeling was that it would be too subjective and would present commanders with the opportunity to remove certain KPC personnel from the selection process. There was no denying this possibility but the absence of any input by the KPC commanders was of great concern. Even taken as an additional, subjective metric against which to judge an applicant, there remained a deep sense of unease in KFOR over using this information. In fact,

where these reports were referred to, the recommendations made on the reports were often ignored by the board members so even those with adverse comments were still selected.

Finally, one contentious issue that was never factored into the selection criteria until the process began was clan balance. The "NATO Standards" methodology did not take into account the influence of clans and their geographical displacement throughout Kosovo. This only came to light during the later selection events. It was rightly noted that on occasions there was a lack of representation from one PZ or another, especially across certain specialisations. This led to selection boards making compromises and choosing personnel because of where they lived rather than based on their performance at the tests. On the face of it, this approach was completely at odds with the NATO standards philosophy; but getting an unbalanced organisation from the beginning could have led to bigger problems later. The selection boards where these issues were raised always found an acceptable solution. This may have been at the cost of the selection procedure's integrity, but it provided the balance needed in the short term. Fortunately this only occurred in a few instances but the lesson should be learned that socio-political factors, involving complex clan, sub clan and family relationships, can not be ignored when planning challenging transitions.

Political intervention

After ten years operating in Kosovo, the NATO force should have known the psyche of the Kosovo Albanians. A complex web of relationships existed between those personnel who had served in the KLA, those who transferred into the KPC and then politics and those who were now hoping to join the KSF. The KLA's legacy is at the heart of this chapter. As the UK Liaison Officer it had been clear that understanding the rivalries amongst the current and former leaders in the KPC was vital to understanding the context of the planned transition. The author developed relationships over time between some of the key personnel on the periphery of the process. During one conversation, a former commander of the KPC made the point to the author that the Prime Minister would never accept the current commander of the KPC, Lieutenant General Selimi, as the new leader of the KSF. This opinion was based on experience dating back to the war in 1999. This information was passed to the KFOR Command group.

On 7 November 2008 a selection board was convened, with high level representation from KFOR, the Kosovan Government and independent observers, in order to select the first KSF Commander. It had been decided that to be eligible for the post of Commander KSF, the candidate had to be a 2* or a 3* officer currently serving in the KPC. In essence, this drew the race down to two people; the current commander of the KPC and his deputy, Major General Rama. The knowledge that one of two men was going to be selected did have a negative effect on the KPC leadership; but only amongst the close "followers" in each camp. The relationship between Selimi and Rama was sometimes difficult but they both understood what the prize was, a new force and a new start, and they were willing to put aside any personal differences in order to achieve it. However, that did not translate elsewhere and the debate over which officer should be selected was long and divisive.

After reaching a decision and according to the Kosovo Constitution, the nominee had to be recommended by the Government and then appointed by the President²⁰. This was expected by the IC (and KFOR) to take a few days, a week at most, so that the new commander could then take his place on subsequent selection boards scheduled in the

²⁰ Article 126 of Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo at:
http://www.uni-graz.at/opv1www_constitution_kosovo.pdf

following weeks. It would also have other very positive benefits for the creation of the new force and the de-activation of the KPC.

The widely expected result was that Lieutenant General Selimi would be selected. Even before the board had sat, the KPC leadership had accepted this outcome and had reacted positively to the prospect. There were some serious issues that needed to be resolved which required the KSF commander designate to step away from KPC issues and begin to shape the KSF's needs through liaison with MCAD. This included understanding future manning structures, establishing a network of KFOR mentors to work alongside KSF personnel from day one, and identifying broader support to the KSF when it finally started as a new organisation. These were just a few of the many arrangements that had to be considered. The idea that General Selimi would start to look forward with KFOR over KSF issues while General Rama would de-activate the KPC was a natural and obvious division of responsibility, which played to their strengths.

The board's recommendation was sent to the Prime Minister's office for his confirmation, on behalf of the Government, before being passed to the President. The chosen candidate widely reported in the newspapers over the following days was Lieutenant General Selimi. After one week it was clear that something was not right and enquiries were made, unofficially, to ascertain what was holding up the announcement. When the fact emerged that the paperwork still sat with the Prime Minister, the earlier warning that he would not want to see Selimi as the first head of the KSF appeared prescient. The consequences of a delay to the sequencing of selections were high. Whilst discreet lobbying was carried out by most of the leading organisations with an interest in getting the appointment endorsed, using diplomatic and political channels, there was silence from KFOR. By the second week a senior KFOR officer was asked why nothing was being done to try to get a decision made one way or the other, to which the response was; "it is not our job to interfere with this matter". This was a curious reaction to a situation that KFOR could, and arguably should, have been better prepared for. The first paper made this point clearly by quoting from the Status Settlement,

"In fulfilling the IMP's [KFOR's] responsibilities, the Head of the IMP [KFOR] shall have the authority, without interference or permission, to do all that he/she judges necessary and proper... to carry out its responsibilities."²¹

²¹ Comprehensive Proposal for the Kosovo Status Settlement, Annex 11, Article 2.1, 26 March 2007

By the beginning of the third week it was clear that time had run out to meet the original deadlines. Despite a concerted effort by the IC, including KFOR who finally engaged with the Government, there remained a complete impasse; the taut timelines could not cope with this level of inactivity. The SOSAB, due on the 24 November, was postponed. A key member of the SOSAB was the designated KSF Commander. Although the process could have continued without General Selimi, his knowledge of the people would have been missed and there would inevitably have been presentational issues; this was not an ideal combination. However KFOR could have carried on without his appointment being ratified.

Finally, an emergency meeting of all key stakeholders was held on 3 December 2008. In the absence of any firm leadership from KFOR, the KPC Coordinator suggested that the original date for the establishment of the KSF would have to slip to the right; a “bold adjustment” was the phrase used. The meeting concluded that the 5 January 2009 date was no longer viable and a new date of 21 January 2009 was set, although this was not initially made public. The delay was announced through the KPC, to much derision by the media. The organisation that was at the heart of the planning, MCAD, and the KPC, drew a collective breath and started changing plans.

The Prime Minister's indecision was deeply unpopular with the KPC Command Group. The plan to split responsibilities between the deputy and the commander of the KPC, as previously described, was never able to happen. The KSF focus that was so urgently needed by the designated commander was absent. With it went every opportunity for him to engage with MCAD and be a part of the final planning team. The effect on those hoping to be selected for the KSF was also profound; while everyone was waiting for a decision by the Prime Minister, morale dipped significantly. Days went by without any sense of direction or purpose. But still locations were closing, equipment was moving and for many there was literally nothing left to do. The hiatus, created by the delay, was the last thing the process needed. Resentment grew and rumours of why the process had been held up fuelled the animosity towards the Government and even KFOR.

The lobbying continued from all quarters until eventually it became clear that the Prime Minister would only act when it suited his purposes. For many in the international community it was mystifying; why would the Prime Minister delay the stand up of the KSF, potentially undermining months of work by NATO? Time dragged on without a decision; the announcement of the KSF Commander was rumoured to be just round the corner but never seemed to arrive. By the 5th week many staff officers in the MCAD were departing for pre-

planned Christmas leave. The whole transition had ground to a halt without any solid dates on which to re-plan the selection boards and prepare for the delayed A Day on 21 January 2009 (assuming this date could be met). Crucially, senior planners also began to take their leave. The MCAD was becoming light on manpower because, when the leave plot was originally agreed, the selection process should have been complete.

Finally on 19 December, 6 weeks after receiving the nomination, the news filtered through that the Prime Minister had finally endorsed the original name given to him. Within a day the President had ratified the candidate and the first commander of the KSF was announced as Lieutenant General Selimi. However, so much time had been lost during this intervention that the risks to the process failing for a range of reasons had increased. As most KFOR personnel went home to celebrate Christmas, the selection process was back on track but without the horsepower to do that much about it, at least in the short term. However, the alternate date for A Day, 21 January 2009, was back in play, giving the MCAD an almost impossible target date to meet. Why COM KFOR remained fixed on this date rather than giving his staff some breathing space remains unclear.

The lessons from this episode are many; the need to have a deep understanding of the people involved in the process of transition is crucial but it is clear that KFOR came up short; perhaps the steady changeover of key positions in KFOR every 6 or 12 months did not allow this level of understanding to ever take root. The ability to second guess local actions and to prevent the situation that faced MCAD and KFOR only comes from having a trusted relationship with the key players. The political and military (Pol/Mil) relationship can not be divorced over these issues and the paper makes it quite clear that KFOR had a responsibility to take the lead during the intervention. Pol/Mil activity is closely interlinked and underpins success. The need to recognise this mutual relationship as part of a complicated security transition is at the heart of current multinational doctrine.²²

²² Published by the UK MOD; Executive Summary, JOINT DOCTRINE NOTE 6/10 SECURITY TRANSITIONS (JDN 6/10), dated November 2010. The document was developed through the Multinational Experiment 6 process:
<http://www.jfcom.mil/about/experiments/mne6.html>

Announcement day

Events moved very quickly once the Commander's position had been confirmed by the President. Immediately after receiving news that Lieutenant General Selimi had been appointed, the date for the SOSAB was announced for a few days later. Even though important advisors were absent from proceedings (including the vetting expert), the board went ahead. The overwhelming need to press on with selections to meet the 21 January 09 deadline was self evident. These circumstances put considerable pressure on MCAD who had to pull out all the relevant information on candidates and formally convene the selection boards, initially without the full complement of personnel available. The political intervention resulted in many of the original team being replaced at a critical time just as the entire plan needed to be reviewed and re-aligned.

Obviously the effect on the corporate knowledge was significant and in MCAD this had a profound impact on the detailed staff work that was required to ensure the selections and the announcement procedure were conducted without error. It was clear even at this stage that the administration in MCAD that underpinned the whole process was under stress because of this loss of expertise, even though the standard induction and training packages were provided. The time pressure on the new team was significant to get up to speed. However, one factor only became critical after the process had been delayed. The single database that held all the candidates' information had been designed by an officer who had ended his tour of duty. When he departed Kosovo before Christmas, he took with him the knowledge that had made the database such a valuable tool. With the pressure mounting during and after the Christmas period, the MCAD team found that the database was potentially their weak link.

Earlier in the planning it had also been decided that all senior officers and those personnel filling sensitive positions in the new force would be vetted by a NATO team that had been established in KFOR HQ from early in 2008. The reports from the vetting team would then be taken into account when conducting the selection procedures at the SOSAB and subsequent boards where appropriate. The absence of the vetting expert on the SOSAB created many problems later on.

There was another key issue that became important. The construction of most military organisations is similar in shape to a pyramid. In other words there are more junior ranks at the bottom. In the KPC, the

shape had transformed over time as a way to get around the poor salaries paid to the lowest ranks. The pyramid was therefore inverted. Consequently the middle ranking officers faced the highest chance of being unselected; two out of three Majors would not get into the KSF and the future for Lieutenant Colonels was similarly bleak. Some individuals would be offered the opportunity to drop in rank by two grades as a maximum to fill a post but nobody would be promoted unless the needs of the service dictated otherwise. The likelihood that there would be a large number of disaffected middle ranking officers, unhappy at their exclusion and critical of the process, was always going to be a problem. The only mitigation against this was a well funded resettlement programme run by the UNDP and pension provision for qualifying personnel by the Government of Kosovo (GoK).

In order to deliver the individual envelopes to the 2800+ KPC personnel on A Day the decision had been taken to use KPC/KSF locations. The idea was simple. Supported by KFOR troops providing security (for KFOR personnel) members of MCAD would set up a series of reception centres across the country. Each KPC unit had been given a time window and a location in which to report and individually sign for their envelopes. Envelopes would have two different sets of information; for the successful candidates it would indicate the appointment they had been assigned and other relevant information about where and when to parade the following day. Unsuccessful candidates would be given information on resettlement and pension rights as appropriate. Every envelope was unique and therefore a high degree of accuracy was needed. However, the combination of the political intervention, the 6 week delay, the changeover of personnel in MCAD and a complex single database conspired against this outcome. What nobody could have anticipated was the impact these subsequent errors would have, compounded by the absence of an effective communications plan.

As mentioned, a small force was required to guard the future KSF barracks in the few days leading up to A Day and during the day itself. The solution was found by identifying a group of logistics personnel who would be “pre-selected” – although not given an envelope with news of their application - and issued with KSF uniforms the weekend before. The fact that these individuals, of all ranks, had been brought together in relative secrecy on a Saturday morning to be given these instructions reflected the extreme sensitivity over the scheduled announcements. The logistics personnel were joined by a group of senior officers who had also been informed that they had been pre-selected to ensure a degree of command and control when the KSF personnel reported for duty the day after A Day.

On the morning of 21 January 2009 the boxes of envelopes were distributed and the MCAD teams departed across the country. Although all KPC personnel had been designated a location at which to learn their fate, the logistics personnel were not included because they were guarding the KPC/KSF locations. Therefore each of the logistics personnel were personally hand delivered their envelopes before the main event began later. At ten o'clock in the morning across the country, the first queues of hopeful KPC personnel lined up to discover whether they would have a new career in the KSF. It was the culmination of months of hard work by MCAD and the result of some highly detailed planning by its staff. To the watching world, the KSF looked ready to take its first few nascent steps.

The first signs that things had not gone well soon began to emerge.

By Midday on A Day the first rumours surfaced of problems over the selection of individuals. A female had been selected even though she had a prosthetic limb. The only other KPC female in her unit had been unsuccessful. Elsewhere, two Lieutenant Colonels arrived at the Training and Doctrine Command reception centre and opened their envelopes to discover that they had both been selected to command the same Battalion. The KSF was only structured for three Battalions in total. Another example that did not have the impact but was a deeply personal blow involved one of the "pre-selected" logisticians. When he had opened his envelope he discovered that he had not been invited to join the KSF. He immediately assumed there had been a mistake. When he arrived for work the next day in the newly titled Land Forces Headquarters he was told the news he did not want to hear. He had not been selected, there had been a mistake and he was required to hand in his newly issued KSF uniform. There was even a lorry driver living in Germany who was selected for the new force; on closer investigation it transpired that he had travelled to Kosovo to undergo testing and then returned to Germany. As mentioned earlier in the paper, the assumption existed that information supplied by the KPC G1 (personnel) department was accurate. In hindsight, this had been an error. There were more examples of mistakes, some more serious than others but they combined to undermine the selection procedure and to give those who had not been selected ammunition with which to complain. The fact that only a modest number of envelopes contained inaccurate information was not the problem in itself. Some argued that such a small number of mistakes was within a reasonable margin of error; that out of the 2800+ letters that had been produced, less than twenty mistakes was a fair return under the circumstances. However, the errors confirmed the impression by many observers that the selection procedure was flawed.

One of the key attributes of a successful transition is the legitimacy with which the process is conducted. By the end of the A Day more and more stories were emerging about mistakes, which put a strain on this legitimacy. The MCAD staff officers were approached with requests to reconsider decisions that had been made. Senior KSF Commanders lobbied KFOR officers to remove or reinstate individuals. In some cases there was very good reason. For example, the KPC's Urban Search and Rescue capability had qualified to lead international missions following a period of training provided by the UK Fire Service charity, Operation Florian.²³ The de-mining unit had also earned a very good reputation by assisting KFOR in de-mining tasks since 1999 as well as in Albania by assisting in the aftermath of the Gerdec ammunition explosion in March 2008. The objective nature of the selection procedure counted against many of these specialists, who were not selected on fitness or medical grounds. An important capability was effectively removed over night and the KSF's vision of quickly deploying on international operations was set back years.²⁴ Only the timely intervention by senior officials within the IC ensured that a waiver was applied in the cases of some of those affected, which partially saved the capability.

²³ Operation Florian was established as a charity in 1995 (Charity Number 1054657). It is a UK Fire Service Humanitarian Charity working to promote the protection of life amongst communities in need, world wide, by the provision of equipment and training to improve fire fighting and rescue capabilities; <http://www.operationflorian.com/kosovo.htm>

²⁴ The KSF is to be a flexible force with no territorial affiliation. Personnel may be required to serve anywhere within the territory of the Republic of Kosovo and may be deployed abroad on operations in accordance with Article 2 of the Law on the Kosovo Security Force; <http://mksf-ks.org/repository/docs/Law%20on%20Service%20in%20the%20KSF.pdf>

Post announcement day reaction

To unselected personnel, good people had been excluded at the expense of others who should not have been selected for the new force. The lack of a coherent and proactive communications plan that should have provided more objective and transparent reporting for the media was coming back to bite KFOR as rumours spread that the KSF Commander had hand picked individuals. Perceptions amongst the wider KPC membership and even from observers outside the organisation were changing. There were a growing number of isolated incidents which, put together, provided a picture that was beginning to play into the hands of those critics who said that the selection process was poorly executed.

The effect of the media coverage in the days that followed A Day and the stories that circulated widely had a very negative impact. Some senior KSF personnel decided that the process had been tainted beyond repair and resigned. The shock of losing some senior officers was followed by the disappointment of losing others in middle ranking positions.

Emerging doctrine on security transitions includes a very clear requirement for mentoring and evaluation support to be in place from day one. This issue had been raised well in advance of the establishment of the KSF but despite some isolated work having been completed in MCAD, there were no plans in place for the KSF's first day of operation. Without a KSF Commander (designate) there was nobody to push this issue. The absence of this essential mechanism was compounded by the allocation of personnel to appointments. The complicated selection process, taken together with KPC applicants' job preferences, resulted in many staff officers filling positions for which they had no experience; some were appointed to key positions in Land Forces Headquarters with no idea what to do. The feeling amongst the newly selected KSF officers was of abandonment because of the absence of any mentoring plan. In the days following A Day this point was made many times. Inefficiency, a significant loss of momentum, disillusionment and an inability by the KSF leadership to impose much order was the result.

Outside the new force many of those who had not been selected were unhappy. Perhaps their feelings would not have been so pronounced had there been fewer high profile mistakes. However, the situation began to take on a life of its own. Within a few days there were pro-

tests by unselected personnel on the streets of Pristina in front of the Government building. Demands to talk to the Minister for the KSF quickly led to a meeting with representatives of the protesters who by this point were highly organised. After the first meeting there were calls to meet the Prime Minister, which then took place. Finally the Prime Minister, the KFOR Commander and the KSF Commander met to discuss the matter. Shortly afterwards, and without reference to his staff officers in KFOR HQ (or indeed in MCAD), the KFOR Commander announced that all eligible unselected personnel would be invited back into the process in order to attend the initial training courses that were already organised by the NATO Training Team for selected KSF personnel. The news was a bombshell. The philosophy of the initial training course had always been to “train in” personnel into the KSF; i.e. the idea was not to fail candidates. However, the announcement ensured that in order to control numbers entering the KSF the NATO Training Team would have to change this approach by “training out” individuals.

The plan had to be amended in order to schedule more courses and the length of time allocated to training had to be extended to cater for the additional numbers. And without an appeals procedure in place, those who were still not invited back were left to conclude that they had failed their medical (if they had taken one), leading to anger and frustration because they were unable to discover why they had “failed”. The International Civilian Office was especially concerned that their role as observers had been damaged by the decision to invite those unselected back into the selection “pot”, as they had signed off the original process. Even the UNDP team implementing the KPC resettlement programme had to re-calculate its planned activity because of a drop in numbers of unselected personnel entering the KPC resettlement scheme. The staff officers in MCAD were also faced with having to reverse engineer the selection process in the light of the new direction.

The decision by COM KFOR to reinstate the unselected KPC personnel effectively implied that the original selection procedure was flawed. KFOR could have chosen to ignore the protesters and continued as planned. The Kosovo politicians who had sat through the selection process could have reiterated the fairness of the process. But none of this happened. Instead, a political compromise was agreed without any reference to the international observers, MCAD staff and newly selected KSF personnel.

Lessons identified

Identifying lessons from which to learn is crucial for organisations to improve and evolve. This applies strongly to the transition from the KPC to the KSF; and whilst some situations are common to both activities this chapter will look at the specifics included in this paper.

The standing up of the KSF generated a number of lessons that are summarised here: firstly, the clear imperative to spend time understanding the socio-political environment and the influence of ancient clan structures and traditions on local actors, who are central to the transition; secondly, the need to produce a comprehensive communications plan to support the other lines of operation during such a complicated activity as a security transition and to have the confidence to be transparent with the media; thirdly, the fundamental need to understand the role of the organisation responsible for the transition, to be flexible and to be proactive; and finally the requirement for strong leadership and a determination to achieve the end state with the appropriate local ownership throughout the process.

The context of this transition could not have been more complicated, dominated as it was by disagreements over recognition and legitimacy not only within the IC but also within the very organisation charged with “supervising and supporting” the stand up of the KSF. It is also worth including the fact that Kosovo had been governed by the United Nations between 1999 and 2007; it had had its security delivered by KFOR constantly for 9 years. And even though Kosovo had unilaterally declared independence, it was still dependent on the IC to provide support, advice and leadership in order to gain the confidence to act as an independent country. Its dependence on KFOR (and by default NATO) over the establishment of the KSF was unavoidable and this led to a relationship that was heavily (and necessarily) one-sided. But this did not prevent Kosovan politics from stamping its mark on the process, however unwelcome its presence was. The situations that have been included in the paper and used as lessons to be learned should be considered in this context.

Taking each lesson in turn, it is clear from this paper that there was an absence of cultural understanding and awareness at different levels within KFOR. As noted in the first paper, this was a surprising outcome, considering how long KFOR had spent in Kosovo. The application of a “western” approach did not always sit comfortably with reality in Kosovo, even if these were the standards to which Kosovo as-

pired. Equally, the comment that influencing the Prime Minister was beyond the role of the military was evidence of KFOR's unwillingness to risk its relationship with the GoK even though it had the authority to continue with the process regardless. The lack of recognition of the importance of the clan system and the geographical spread of each clan would ideally have been taken into account when considering the best approach to selecting KSF personnel. Leaving some PZs without any significant representation was never going to be accepted by the KSF leadership and it was no surprise that this point was raised during selections. The need for compromise by KFOR at the beginning to ensure the KSF had the basic framework against which to develop would, over time, be replaced by a more objective and appropriate approach to selection and recruiting. This is a strong lesson to apply in other similar situations where clan balance is culturally important.

The absence of a communications plan and associated narrative was an omission. The KPC Information Operations plan was too little too late and it is questionable whether the KPC should have had anything to do with the KSF communications plan, especially when NATO was so keen to de-link the two organisations. Time and again the lack of any proactive campaign allowed the Kosovan national media to run stories which often fuelled the lack of understanding of the process held by many in the KPC and elsewhere. The unique status of Kosovo, and NATO's policy of adopting a reactionary stance, was largely responsible for this. The reliance on the KPC to discuss KSF matters was unrealistic and did not improve understanding of the KSF process by the media. As an example, it was only towards the end of the RSS implementation, during the final days of selection at Ferizaj, that a journalist asked to visit the selection tests in order to write an article on what was happening. Although it could be argued that if others had requested this access earlier it would have been granted, the fact that KFOR waited to be approached over such an important activity showed the organisation to be constrained by politics at the expense of fulfilling the mission as efficiently as possible.

The third lesson focuses on the role of KFOR in the stand up of the KSF. KFOR's role was quite clear, but there was a widely held view that some inside the organisation wanted to remain at arms length from the whole idea of establishing the Kosovo Security Force (or a *Kosovo security force* as it was often referred within KFOR, reflecting the lack of recognition of the GoK with the NATO force). The fact that the NATO Advisory Team contributed to the stand up of the KSF, for example through the provision of its regulations, demonstrated that KFOR had a lack of capacity or political will to do the work itself. There were times when a comprehensive approach to the problem and taking the initiative would have brought better results. The debacle

over the Prime Minister's intervention cried out for firm leadership. The example cited in the paper referred to the need for an effective military and political relationship which could have avoided many of the issues that occurred during this period. In addition to taking a more robust and forward-leaning approach, the balance between meeting strategic deadlines and remaining flexible seemed to have been lost. Once the reality dawned that the process was in trouble, moving selections and the subsequent start date for the KSF to the right was sensible. However, there appeared to be an unhelpful rush to meet the second date on 21 January 2009. As the paper made clear, the pressure of a new team and the short deadlines generated many unintended consequences. The absence of any mentoring for the KSF in the days and weeks that followed its launch is a further example of an inconsistent approach. Emerging doctrine addresses this point, as mentioned in the paper, but it should have been obvious that this need was vital to get the new force operating efficiently and with purpose.

Conclusion

The story of how the KSF eventually stood up, linked as it was with the de-activation of the KPC, remains a triumph for a very small number of people who applied their collective experience and positive approach to ensuring that the KSF began its life in the best possible shape. They faced many hurdles along the way and tight timelines created a high pressure environment from the beginning. The tenacity of many of the officers in MCAD, together with a practical and decisive role played by the senior leadership in the IC and the KSF before and after stand up, ensured that most difficulties were overcome. As the paper describes, there were some issues that even well trained staff officers were unable to solve. The need for leadership and direction was not always present when it was needed most and this often made matters more difficult than they needed to be. Low level solutions and “work-arounds”, without recourse to the chain of command, featured strongly. A pragmatic approach to this transition was the only option. The scale of the achievement on A Day reflected the work that the MCAD put in to keep the KSF on track. That the process was delayed without timely pressure from KFOR will probably be put down to a lack of cultural understanding and a fear of jeopardising the safe and secure environment that the 16,000 strong KFOR maintained. The lessons learned chapter illuminates these issues.

The paper has attempted to provide a unique view of events that led to the establishment of the KSF over the winter of 2008/09 in Kosovo. The paper has artificially narrowed its scope to concentrate on the key issues directly involved in the MCAD plan to stand up the force and has only included references to other activity in passing. It is worth remembering that during the period described here there were many other events taking place, not least the de-activation of the KPC which impacted directly on the people who were central to the KSF’s immediate future. The inclusion of real life examples was intended to provide the reader with a deeper understanding of what happened, to recognise areas of best practice and to observe where mistakes were made.

As noted at the start of the paper, the paper was not written to criticise any organisation or to question the conduct of individuals. It was designed to give the reader a picture of the difficulties faced by KFOR and NATO during the transition between the KPC and the KSF. As the paper has highlighted, a well worked plan even with the bare minimum of resources can be de-railed by the most unexpected of

sources. The need therefore to conduct a thorough evaluation of the problem initially, the need to have total commitment from all stakeholders involved in the project, and the need to understand the people at the heart of the transition is self evident.

The arrival of relevant multinational doctrine for a security transition of this type is timely and should be of great assistance to future military and civilian planners when conducting this activity in a country emerging from conflict. The case of Kosovo, struggling to gain recognition and legitimacy on the international stage,²⁵ ensured that the security transition was going to have an added dimension of complexity. That the KSF has since reached Initial Operating Capability is testament to the individuals within the organisation, the KSF leadership in particular, who remained focused on the prize of a functioning KSF.

And what was the result? The youngest security organisation in the Balkans, the Kosovo Security Force, is now firmly established and will take its rightful place at the heart of Kosovo's fledgling status as a member of the international community.

²⁵ The International Court of Justice delivered its advisory opinion on 22 July 2010, by a vote of 10 to 4 that; "the declaration of independence of the 17th of February 2008 did not violate general international law."