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## **ASYMMETRY OF THE ALBANIAN- -MACEDONIAN MILITARY CONFLICT IN 2001**

### **MILITARY CHARACTERISTICS OF THE FIGHT IN THE REGIONS OF TETOVO, KUMANOVO, ARAČINOVO AND VAKSINCE**

#### **ABSTRACT**

The aim of this paper is to present the circumstances and course of the Albanian-Macedonian conflict in 2001, the political situation in Macedonia after 1991, the relationship between Macedonia and its western neighbour – Albania, Macedonian police and armed forces and the structures of National Liberation Army (KLA) as well. The author presents a thorough analysis of the asymmetric action of the Albanian terrorists and security forces of Macedonia. It emphasises that the Macedonian Albanians' revolt began when the military and security forces of Serbia joined the operations against Albanian terrorists in southern Serbia. Additionally, the threat of destabilisation of the Macedonian state is still valid. Former KLA structures were only partially disassembled, a large amount of equipment and weapons was hidden. Despite of the numerous international initiatives and progressive (but also illusory) stability, the ethnic and political conflict has been deferred and it is only a matter of time for someone to reopen the Macedonian "Pandora's box". Moreover, the Security System of the Republic of Macedonia must be constructed so that at the start of the rebellion all subsystems could be able to counter the threat effectively. Therefore, it is necessary for Macedonia to cooperate between its security forces and neighbours as well as to build a military infrastructure, to be able to use it to manoeuvre troops and special forces.

**Key-words:** asymmetric conflict, international relations, armed forces, Macedonian Army, National Liberation Army, military operations, Albanian terrorists, rebels

After 1991 Macedonia was the only republic that managed to avoid civil war. Many journalists and politicians defined it as the “safe haven” during nearly five years of the bloody conflict that led to the collapse of the Federation of Yugoslavia. At that time, the young state, facing many problems, especially economic ones, was trying to build democratic foundations of the country to have a possibility to become the permanent subject of international relations.<sup>1</sup> However, there were many problems that the Macedonians had to deal with, both external and internal. Macedonia’s relations with its neighbours, Greece and Bulgaria, were particularly concerning. The decades-long struggle for the political impact on the area of Macedonia between these countries was completely contrary to the idea of autonomy of the Macedonian people. Therefore, it was just a matter of time when the conflict, participants of which would be the countries outside the disintegrated Yugoslav federation, would flare up again.

The recognition of the country on the international arena was an essential issue for Macedonia. On the 15<sup>th</sup> of January 1991 Macedonia was recognized by Bulgaria, which indicated a remarkable change in the current perception of the Macedonian issue. Despite the still existing differences, especially in the definition of *Macedonian*, *Macedonian language* and a few other problems, the Bulgarians decided that it would be appropriate to move the controversies concerning the Macedonian issue to the dimension of historical and cultural debate.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, there existed also a factor of the Greek-Macedonian relations, which were tense since the declaration of independence due to the non-recognition of Macedonia as an independent political entity. And, despite various international initiatives, they still leave much to be desired.

In the initial period, relations between Skopje and Belgrade were tense. The Macedonians, however, succeeded in leading to a dialogue, which resulted in the establishment of diplomatic relations and the systematic building of the relationship based on mutual respect. Unfortunately, the ambiguous attitude of the Macedonian government in 1999 ruined the initiated dialogue. The deterioration in the Serbo-Macedonian relations was affected by the fact that Skopje decided to be ready to take part in the NATO operation – “Joint Guarantor”, which was said in Belgrade to be harmful to the relations between the two countries.

In contrast, the relationship between Macedonia and its western neighbour – Albania, was completely different. The contacts were established in 1992 and despite

<sup>1</sup> G. Veljovski, *Effectiveness of the Counterinsurgency Operations during the Macedonian Conflict in 2001*, Fort Leavenworth 2010, p. 19; B. Vankovska, ‘Macedonian Army of Peace in Times of Conflicts and War’, Belgrade Centre for Security Policy, 28 September 2005, at <<http://www.bezbednost.org/All-publications/4242/Macedonian-Army-of-peace-in-times-of-conflicts.shtml>>, 12 March 2013.

<sup>2</sup> I. Stawowy-Kawka, *Historia Macedonii*, Wrocław 2000, p. 306.

the interferences, they were continued in a friendly atmosphere. The only issues that brought a cooling in Tirana-Skopje relations were the actions of the Albanian minority in Macedonia and the support, which was granted to them by Albania. Moreover, Skopje also looked rather anxiously at slogans about the unification of all Albanians in the idea of "the Great Albania" proclaimed by many politicians of Albania and Kosovo.

Macedonian authorities were also concerned about the tense situation in Kosovo. Particularly worrying was the fact that in 1992 the Albanians of Macedonia started their destructive activities consisting of the organisation of referendums and making attempts to overthrow the military. A significant influx of Kosovar Albanians in Macedonia only deepened the growing conflict. More and more often had the Albanians put forward demands for increased rights for the Albanian minority, trying to convince the international public opinion that the numerous irredentist addresses were a Serbian provocation aimed to destabilise Macedonia. Moreover, not taking the allegedly conciliatory gestures of the Macedonian Albanians' political representatives into consideration, other acts of hostility among extreme nationalist circles associated with Kosovar KLA (Kosovo Liberation Army) took place increasingly frequently.

In 1996 the mayors elected in the cities of Tetovo and Gostivar were candidates of DPA (Democratic Party of Albanians) – Alaydin Demiri and Rufi Osmanli. One of the first decisions of the new government was displaying the Albanian flag on the government flag poles<sup>3</sup>, which was not accepted by the administration and the Macedonian population. Skopje's reaction was immediate. Prime Minister Branko Crvenkovski ordered a police action and an arrest of the two mayors. The Albanian mayors were sentenced to long prison terms.<sup>4</sup> However, among the Albanian population there were mass protests against the police operation. It was a prelude to the events that were to take place in less than four years.

During the conflict in Kosovo, western Macedonia was used by the Kosovar terrorists as one of the main areas of logistics and training base. There were stores of weapons and equipment in many border villages. What is more, there were also fighters trained and medical care provided for Kosovar terrorists returning from raids. The already complicated situation was made worse by military operations conducted by NATO against the "new Yugoslavia", initiated by an air operation in 1999. At the same time substantial support was granted to KLA, which activated its guerrilla (or rather terror).

The end of fighting in Kosovo led to signing an agreement by Yugoslav authorities, by virtue of which international forces were introduced into the territories of Kosovo as a part of KFOR. The victory over the Serbs made it clear to the Albanians that they have never been so close as then to fulfilling the idea of creating "Greater Albania". Therefore, it can be claimed that the measures taken in 2000 and 2001 by military organisations created with help of the Kosovars – Presev Liberation Army, Medvedja

<sup>3</sup> O. Valecki, 'War in Macedonia at 2001 Year', at <<http://www.militaryimages.net/forums/archive/index.php/t-16950.html>>, 21 March 2013.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

and Bujanovac (Ushtria Çlirimtare për Preshevë, Medvegjë dhe Bujanoc hereinafter: UPCMB<sup>5</sup>) and the National Liberation Army, KLA (Ushtria Çlirimtare e Kosovës në Malësinë e Tetovës hereinafter: NMET KLA) – aimed to keep the focus on this purpose.

Both organisations have common roots. They were set by the radical wing of the Kosovo Liberation Army fighters who, after the end of hostilities in the area of Kosovo, took a further struggle aiming to fulfil the dream about “Greater Albania”. UPCMB terrorist groups began operations in January 2000 (less than a few months after the end of fighting in Kosovo<sup>6</sup>), attacking civilians and police stations in the region of Dobrosin village. They were continued until May 2001, when, as a result of operations carried out by the Serbian special forces and army, the structure of UPCMB was crushed<sup>7</sup> and the regions of Preshevo (Preševo), Medveda (Medveda) and Bujanovac were cleaned from Albanian terrorists while returning this area to the jurisdiction of the Republic of Serbia.

It should be noted that the Macedonian Albanians’ revolt began when the military and security forces of Serbia joined the operations against Albanian terrorists in southern Serbia. The documents acquired by the Serbian security forces show that the two organizations (i.e. UPCMB an UÇK NMET) were closely cooperating.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, we can conclude that both actions were aimed to internationalise the two conflicts and to achieve further benefits for the Albanians. It seems highly unlikely that the actions taken by the Albanians from the Preševo (Preševo) Valley, Medvedja (Medveda), Bujanovac and northern and north-western Macedonia were uncoordinated and not accepted by the management (command) of the KLA.<sup>9</sup> It is especially unbelievable due

<sup>5</sup> More about the UPCMB activities and antiterrorist operations of Serbian special forces: M. Simović, N. Karanović, *Protivteroristička operacija na jugu Srbije*, Beograd 2004.

<sup>6</sup> Serbian experts claim that UPCMB was organized in late 1999 shortly after the end of fighting in Kosovo and the introduction of peacekeeping forces.

<sup>7</sup> The security forces operation was carried out between March the 14<sup>th</sup> and May the 31<sup>st</sup>. It should be noted that the Serbs used a considerable force in order to rout the terrorist forces. Having numerical and technological superiority, it took them three months to shatter the main grouping and clean the area overrun by terrorists. Serbian forces have not removed the phenomenon by itself, as the sporadic acts of terror continue. It can be assumed that the security forces succeed to stop the phenomenon, but it could not completely eliminate the terrorist threat. It should be noted that Mihai Carp’s article posted in the winter edition of the 2002 *NATO Review*, in which the expert, characterized as dealing with issues of conflict in Macedonia and southern Serbia (he was one of the negotiators of the NATO teams in the region), allegedly forgot about the Serbian security forces’ operations and the agreements concluded between the command of NATO and Belgrade. In his article there is no chance of finding a mention of the Albanians’ terrorist operations, but he did not forget the fact that the Serbian entities, after their withdrawal from Kosovo, were focused in the area of the Preševo Valley, Medvedja and Bujanovac, thereby suggesting that the Albanians had the moral right to defend their people in fear of a repetition of the scenario of Kosovo. Analysis of the NATO Political Department’s employee is another example of a subjective perspective and assessment of the Albanian-Serbian and Macedonian-Albanian conflict. M. Carp, ‘Zażegnany dramat’, *NATO Review*, winter 2002, at <[http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2002/issue4/polish/art2\\_pr.html](http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2002/issue4/polish/art2_pr.html)>, 21 May 2013.

<sup>8</sup> M. Simović, N. Karanović, *Protivteroristička operacija...*, p. 90.

<sup>9</sup> B. Churcher, *Kosovo Lindore/Preshevo 1991-2002 and The FYROM Conflict*, March 2002, Conflict Studies Research Centre, G104, pp. 16-18.

to the fact that the core of both army troops were terrorists of Kosovo. The scenario of events related to the conflict in these nearby regions is also very similar to the earlier events in Kosovo.

## MACEDONIAN POLICE AND ARMED FORCES

### Armed forces

Military companies of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Military District, whose headquarters were in Skopje, stationed on the territory of the Republic of Macedonia. The headquarters of the 41<sup>st</sup> Corps stationed in Bitola, while the 42<sup>nd</sup> in Kumanovo. The 98<sup>th</sup> helicopters Brigade forming part of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Corps of Air Force and Air Defence<sup>10</sup> was dislocated in Skopje. The Macedonian armed forces were began to be formed after the federal units left the garrisons located in the territory of the Republic of Macedonia.

The president is the head of the armed forces of the Republic of Macedonia and he acts as the Supreme Commander. He makes decisions related to planning, defensive strategy and development of the armed forces. He is the head of a collegial organ, that is the Security Council of the Republic, and prepares planning documents and recommendations on security and military issues of Macedonia. The State Parliament is responsible for the realisation of the guidelines connected to security and defence policy, adopts the budget and declares the state of war in case of a threat of state sovereignty. Moreover, it exercises civilian control over the armed forces with the help of the parliamentary security and defence committee. The leader of the Macedonian army is the Minister of National Defence and he governs the entire armed forces. The chief of the General Staff commands the army and reports directly to the Minister of the National Defence.

The Macedonian Army (*Armija na Republika Makedonija*, hereinafter: ARM) was created on the basis of the republican Territorial Defence (*Teritorijalna Odbrana*, hereinafter: OT).<sup>11</sup> It was practically free of heavy weapons and equipment. Leaving Macedonia, units of Yugoslav People's Army took the weapons and ammunition with them and devastated the barracks and bases.<sup>12</sup> After the JNA left, in Macedonia three Army Corps (with headquarters in Kumanovo, Bitola and Skopje) were created, which had three light infantry divisions, 22 brigades and eight regiments<sup>13</sup> where only 15 000

<sup>10</sup> D. Marijan, *Slom Titove armije. Jugoslavenska narodna armija i raspad Jugoslavije 1987.-1992.*, Zagreb 2008, pp. 111-112.

<sup>11</sup> R.L. Tarnstrom, *Balkan Battles. Turkey, Greece, Albania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Romania*, Lindsborg 1998, p. 550 (*Armed Forces Handbooks*).

<sup>12</sup> The JNA left the barracks situated on the territory of Macedonia under an agreement signed between the President Kiro Gligorov and the command of the Federal Army on February 21<sup>st</sup>, 1992. According to the agreement, the federal units had to leave the territory of Macedonia until April 15<sup>th</sup> 1992.

<sup>13</sup> According to a study by Dr. N. Thomas and K. Mikulan: three corps and 19 brigades, including one armoured, two mechanized, 15 light and infantry and one mixed artillery. N. Thomas, K. Mikulan, *The Yugoslav Wars, 2: Bosnia, Kosovo and Macedonia 1992-2001*, Oxford 2006, p. 52 (*Elite*).

soldiers<sup>14</sup> served. Four T-34s, 36 T-55s and, what is more, about 70 Multiple Rocket Launchers type "Plamen", "Oganj" (cal. 128 mm) and "Grad" (cal. 122 mm), as well as up to 150 mortars cal. 120, 80 and 60 mm., made the Macedonians' armour. Mi-17 choppers, other helicopters, four planes type J-21 "Orao" and two outdated G-2s "Galeb" (dedicated both for training and battle purposes) provided the air support ground. Just before the start of the Albanian rebellion in Macedonia, Bulgaria sent Macedonia one hundred M-30 howitzers cal. 122 mm. and 60 T-55 tanks, with the possibility to deliver another 50 cars if necessary. In addition, from 1998 to 1999 the Macedonian armed forces and special units received up to 200 BTR-70, M-113 and TAM-170<sup>15</sup> armoured personnel carriers from Germany under the military assistance from the NATO. The United States sent 48 "Hummers", which were intended to equip the special forces together with 12 BTR-80 APS purchased in Kazakhstan.<sup>16</sup>

The Macedonians, expecting that there may be a conflict with the Albanians, also strengthened the air force by buying four Mi-8MTs, two Mi-17s, eight assault Mi-24bs and two Mi 24s K<sup>17</sup> in the Ukraine in 2001 – 2002. Probably they also hired four close air support planes – SU-25. Some sources say that they bought these planes, while renting flying and technical personnel, especially people who were to work on "Hinds".<sup>18</sup>

The third Yugoslavia also handed over a number of light infantry weapons but this was after the first phase of the fight in Macedonia. Then several dozen sniper rifles, M-90 grenade launchers and mortars cal. 120mm were sent. In addition, a team of over a dozen counsellors and instructors (specialists in counter-terrorism) was sent to the Macedonian Interior Ministry.<sup>19</sup>

## Police

Macedonian police was formed on the basis of existing units and their reserves and consisted of 7.000 active and reserve officers serving in 123 commands.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, a rapid response unit (so-called "Tigrovi") for counterinsurgency and counterterrorism operations was created. The support for it should have been given by the Police Aviation Unit. After the outbreak of hostilities, considering the absence of specialised anti-terrorist units, another anti-terrorist unit was established – the Special Police Unit ("Levi"). It was formed to fight against the Albanian Liberation Army (KLA).<sup>21</sup>

<sup>14</sup> O. Valecki, 'War in Macedonia...'

<sup>15</sup> The Macedonians received M-113s from Italy, while other vehicles were from Germany.

<sup>16</sup> O. Valecki, 'War in Macedonia...'

<sup>17</sup> They were used to establish a helicopter attack squadron in March 2001. N. Thomas, K. Mikulan, *The Yugoslav Wars*, 2, p. 52.

<sup>18</sup> This is the term of Mi-24 attack helicopter used in the NATO code.

<sup>19</sup> O. Valecki, 'War in Macedonia...'

<sup>20</sup> N. Thomas, K. Mikulan, *The Yugoslav Wars*, 2, pp. 52-53.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.



## National Liberation Army (KLA)

The structures of Albanians' illegal armed forces probably started to be formed in February 2000 on the basis of dissolved units of the KLA<sup>22</sup> (Ushtria Çlirimtare e Kosovës).<sup>23</sup> The first commander of the military structure was a known political activist Ali Ahmeti, who gathered 200 militants (earlier fighting with terrorists from Kosovo) around him and brought to life the National Liberation Army – Ushtria Çlirimtare e Kosovës në Malësinë e Tetovës.<sup>24</sup> The headquarters of the underground army was Shipkovitsa (Sipkovica) village situated northwards from Tetova. In a short time the Macedonian Albanians managed to form six brigades: 111, 113 “Imet Jashari”, 114 “Fadil Nimani Tigar” (they stationed in the region of the mountain range Skopska Crna Gora), 112 (in the region of Gostivar).<sup>25</sup> Despite using the name “brigade”, these units could be as numerous as a weak battalion. They consisted of even 800 fighters armed with light infantry weapons. Their equipment were anti-aircraft and anti-tank weapons and a considerable amount of anti-tank mines and landmines. Some experts also say that the troops consisted of Mujahedeen platoons, mostly made up of former fanatical soldiers of the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Apart from these subunits, there existed also an independent branch “Mujahedin” numbering 150 ex-combatants from Bosnia, Afghanistan and Turkey and led by Selim Ferit.<sup>26</sup>

## ANALYSIS OF THE ASYMMETRIC ACTION OF THE ALBANIAN TERRORISTS AND SECURITY FORCES OF MACEDONIA

To show the complexity of military operations in Macedonian-Albanian conflict in 2001, it is essential to clarify the causal relationships that occur in the relationship between the four key players: the Albanian terrorists, security forces, government and

<sup>22</sup> The core of the newly formed organization were terrorists from the extreme nationalist circles shattered by the KLA and the Serbian special forces Liberation Army of Preševo, Medvedja and Bujanovac. O. Valecki, ‘War in Macedonia...’

<sup>23</sup> According to the Albanian data published on Zeqirja Rexhepi's website – KLA NMET was established between 1997–1999. *Општествено-политичките настани кај Албанците во Македонија 1990-2001*, М-р ЗЕКИРЈА РЕЏЕПИ, at <[http://zeqirja-rexhepi.blogspot.com/2008/01/blog-post\\_2168.html](http://zeqirja-rexhepi.blogspot.com/2008/01/blog-post_2168.html)>. 6 April 2013.

<sup>24</sup> Ushtria Çlirimtare e Kosovës në Malësinë e Tetovës (KLA NMET) was theoretically disbanded after the war in Macedonia. Despite the fact that the Ohrid Agreement was signed, only some members of the organization laid down their arms and revealed themselves. They have set up a new structure called the Albanian National Army, ANA (Cannon Kombëtar Shqiptare). Its political wing is the party United National Albanian Front (FBKSh), whose leader is Gafur Adília aka Valdet Vardari. The main goal of political and military is to continue the fight, which is expected to create the “Greater Albania”. S. Kalitowski, ‘Albańska Armia Narodowa (AKSh)’, Terrorism!com, at <<http://www.terroryzm.com/albanska-armia-narodowa-aksh/>>, 21 May 2013.

<sup>25</sup> N. Thomas, K. Mikulan, *The Yugoslav Wars*, 2, p. 53.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

the international community. These compounds not only affected the events preceding the conflict but also largely implied its expansion and transformation towards civil war. Events taking place in the southern Serbia (in the Preshevo [Preševo] Valley) and Kosovo had a decisive impact on the radicalization of religious Macedonian Albanians. An important role in this process was played by the international community that allowed to give a part of the sovereign state to irredentists, thus creating a precedent that could be used in other parts of the unstable Balkans.

Resistance of the government considering the demands of the Albanians was a consequence of the events in neighbouring Kosovo. At the same time the lack of willingness for the discourse of the Macedonian Albanian made it clear that the only method for Skopje was using its strength as the rebels seized the initiative and actually dictated terms with the active help and anti-Macedonian attitude of the EU and NATO. The conflict, which lasted more than six months, was very dynamic, and it can be divided into three stages:

- the first initial phase, lasting from February to April 2001, was associated with the fighting around Tetovo<sup>27</sup>;
- the second phase lasted from April to May 2001 and covered the period of cease-fire, the suspension of fighting, during which both sides reinforced their forces. The rebels retreated to the mountains;
- the third phase lasted from May to August 2001 and was characterized by renewing the fight which reached a climax state pointing to the possibility of transformation of the conflict into a civil war, which should be the main aim of the activities of Albanian terrorists. The military operations were interrupted by the mediation of NATO and the EU<sup>28</sup>.

The attack of 15 Albanian terrorists, who attacked the Macedonian police station on the 15<sup>th</sup> of March 2001, began the fight.<sup>29</sup> The exchange of fire injured 18 people, mostly policemen. After the cease-fire, the Albanian group withdrew in the direction of the border with Kosovo. After this incident, there was another one. The next day, the Albanians took control over the Malinovo Malo village, and on March 17 took other vil-

<sup>27</sup> Опитетствено-политичките...

<sup>28</sup> G. Veljovski, *Effectiveness of the Counterinsurgency Operations...*, pp. 17-18.

<sup>29</sup> John Phillips thinks that the relevant conflict began around March the 24<sup>th</sup> after nearly two months of incidents involving firearms, the active party of which were the Albanians, attempting the number of attacks both on the Macedonian population and against security forces and government bodies. J. Phillips, *Macedonia. Warlords and Rebels in the Balkans*, London-New York 2004, p. 87. According to G. Veljovski, the fight resulted in the kidnapping of journalists, which took place on the 24<sup>th</sup> of February 2001. Using the hijacked Macedonian journalists, the Albanians sent a declaration of war to the government in Skopje. O. Valecki, 'War in Macedonia...'; G. Veljovski, *Effectiveness of the Counterinsurgency Operations...*, p. 35. According to Zidas Daskalovski, the conflict was initiated by Albanian terrorists' attack on the Macedonian police in Tearce (a village located 12 km north from Tetova) on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of January 2001. As a result of the attack there was one officer killed and three were wounded. Z. Daskalovski, 'The Macedonian Conflict of 2001: Between Successful Diplomacy, Rhetoric and Terror', *Studies in Post-Communism Occasional Paper*, No. 7 (2004), p. 7, at <<http://people.stfx.ca/cpcs/studies-in-post-communism/daskalovski2004.pdf>>, 21 May 2013.



lages around Tetova and attacked the Koltuk village inhabited by the Macedonians. On the same day the fighting moved also to Kumanovo, where a police station was attacked. At the same time the NMET KLA troops fired at both government buildings and civilian houses from the hills surrounding Tetovo. The barracks of the German army, dislocated in Tetovo in 1999 after the end of the fight in Kosovo, were also bombarded.<sup>30</sup>

Rebel brigades carried out activities in the area of: Kumanovo (113<sup>th</sup> brigade), near Skopje (114<sup>th</sup> brigade), Tetovo (112<sup>th</sup> brigade), Gostivar (116<sup>th</sup> brigade) and Radusha (Raduša – 115<sup>th</sup> Brigade). According to the Albanian data, these forces consisted of about 5 000 militants fighting in combat units and logistics.<sup>31</sup> The Macedonian data showed that a total number of rebel forces ranged from 2 000 to 3 000 people. Among them were veterans of the fights in Croatia, Bosnia, Kosovo, and a group of Mujahideens.<sup>32</sup>

Macedonian special forces and AMR section entered Tetovo on the 18<sup>th</sup> of May supported by a platoon of tanks but it did not change the situation because the shelling was still continued. Seeing no reaction of Skopje, the Albanians attacked the city on the 20<sup>th</sup> of May, pushing the police into the centre. In response, the government ordered to get new forces there and to support the fighting units in the area of Tetovo with artillery.<sup>33</sup>

It was not until May the 21<sup>st</sup> that the special forces of the Macedonian Interior Ministry threw Albanian rebels troops away from Tetovo after the entering of a combat assault helicopter Mi-24. At the same time AMR artillery continued shelling the hills, making it impossible for NMET KLA militant groups to receive support. The next day, the army and special forces went on the offensive, throwing the rebels away from a number of settlements and villages. A successful trip to the village Dzermo (Gjermo), to the Albanian logistics centre was undertaken. A group of Macedonian paratroopers supported by attack helicopters quickly overwhelmed the protection and liquidated terrorists' stocks. It was one of the few successful Macedonian special forces operations during the conflict. Until the 24<sup>th</sup> of March the Macedonians restored control over Selce, Veice, Lahce villages. In the next days the Macedonian army managed to push the rebel brigades to the border with Kosovo and conquer more towns and settlements. On the 29<sup>th</sup> of March the special units (including the "Tigers" – a special unit of the Interior Ministry and paramilitary troops "Wolves" and "Scorpions") hit successfully and conquered Tanushevci.

Success, however, was not used, as in the face of pressure of the international community, especially of the EU mission and of the observers team from NATO there was a cease-fire. Even then, the Macedonian press published reports suggesting that the

<sup>30</sup> As a result of firing one German soldier was wounded.

<sup>31</sup> According to press reports, up to 2500 Albanian rebels were involved in the fighting. 'Pogranicze macedońsko-kosowskie w ogniu', RFM24, 24 March 2011, at <<http://www.rmfm24.pl/fakty/polska/news-pogranicze-macedonsko-kosowskie-w-ogniu,nId,161309>>, 12 December 2012.

<sup>32</sup> V. Stojarová, 'Albanian National Armies – Terrorists, Guerrillas or National Liberation Movements?', at <<http://ispo.fss.muni.cz/uploads/2download/Stojarova-Albania.pdf>>, 23 April 2013.

<sup>33</sup> O. Valecki, 'War in Macedonia...'; 'Walki w Macedonii', RFM24, 16 March 2001, at <<http://www.rmfm24.pl/ekonomia/news-walki-w-macedonii,nId,162789>>, 12 December 2012.

rebels were allegedly trained by instructors drawn from the British special forces, the SAS regiment. This was connected with the activity of British diplomacy, which had to opt for an early ceasefire. This information was denied by the British ambassador in Skopje – Mark Dickenson.<sup>34</sup> The representatives of NATO and the EU approved the Skopje government's position, believing that the steps taken by the Macedonian authorities to stop the conflict were right and brought a hope for the end of it. On the other hand, the Albanian politicians had a slightly different opinion.<sup>35</sup>

The first phase of the fighting was ended. The Albanians, despite the success of the security forces and the Macedonian troops, managed to maintain some villages along the border with Kosovo. The Macedonians also failed to shatter the rebel units, although they suffered significant losses in soldiers and equipment. During the fighting Albanians won anti-tank kits, several armoured personnel carriers and a tank T-55.<sup>36</sup> During the first days of fighting Albanians have achieved the greatest success as a result of the lack of coordination between the security forces and the Macedonian army.

The fighting of Albanians ended up with a success in the region of Kumanovo. The Albanian rebels, concerning the inaction of the government forces, took control of the area from the Matejche (Matejce) village to the Lipkovo Lake. As a result, their positions allowed to observe the region of the capital of Macedonia – Skopje.

Assessment of the activities of Albanian and Macedonian parties of the conflict gives rise to the following conclusions:

- the Albanians had up-to-date information about the initiatives of the security forces and the army, and were able to exploit the weaknesses of the government forces;
- they used the surprise and the area factor effectively, as well as their experience in organising irregular actions;
- they also used the support of the civilian population and the KLA structures' help effectively;
- they led to the internationalization of the conflict;
- the security forces and the army ignored Macedonian opponent;
- the government in Skopje was surprised by the pace of the rebellion's development, despite earlier signals that had suggested there may be an outbreak of insurrection covering large areas of the country;
- the special forces and the army of Macedonia were not prepared for counterinsurgency operations on a large scale;
- in the armed forces, there were no specialized anti-partisan and counterterrorist units, and a few such branches of Interior Ministry were not able to suppress the rebellion effectively.

<sup>34</sup> J. Phillips, *Macedonia...*, p. 93.

<sup>35</sup> 'Albańczycy chcą walczyć, Solana w Tetowie', RFM24, 27 March 2001, at <<http://www.rfm24.pl/ekonomia/news-albanczyzy-chca-walczyt-solana-w-tetowie,nId,160426>>, 12 December 2012.

<sup>36</sup> During the action Albanians bought also several short-range anti-aircraft kits type "Strela 2". Kits were probably provided by the Yugoslav mafia, and were obtained from the resources of the Yugoslav army.

These conclusions suggest that the actions of Albanians were prepared a long time before and perfectly planned. The rebels also knew that the security forces and the Macedonian army would fail to quell the uprising because they do not have enough manpower and resources to conduct an effective anti-partisan operation. Therefore, the tactics that were used in this phase were to occupy as much territory of Macedonia as possible and to inflict heavy losses on the government forces while spreading propaganda and having a psychological impact on both the population of Macedonia and the world public opinion. In the reports submitted to the Western media an attempt was made to present a picture of the brave Albanian fighters protecting the civilian population and, on the other hand, the barbaric government forces repressing the Albanian population rather than fighting against the insurgents. This action scheme succeeded in Kosovo and previously also in Bosnia. The Albanians were able to achieve a considerable success also in Macedonia. Insufficient investment in the security system and in the armed forces caused a situation in which the government in Skopje remained virtually helpless against the insurgency, which transformed the local events in the uprising of the part of state's population threatening a permanent destabilization, chaos and probably a long-lasting civil war, even a separation of the part of Macedonia's territory.

A distinct feature of asymmetric operations in the first phase was undoubtedly an unequal power relationship of the sides of the conflict. However, it was largely offset by the terrain and surprise factor, as well as the lack of adequate forces and resources for a quick elimination of the rebellion for the potentially stronger side. Another feature that provides the asymmetry of the conflict was the transformation of the local instances in an open partisan warfare, which in turn was to transform into a war of national liberation.

The ruthlessness in the conduct of combat, the use of aircraft and artillery by the government indicated its determination. Despite attempts to eliminate the threat, the Macedonians failed to relieve the revolt. Until the armistice, large areas of north-western Macedonia were recaptured, however, no attempt was made to liquidate hotbeds of rebellion in the east and north. Thus, despite inflicting significant losses to NMET KLA, it was not possible to break up its brigades and command structures. This allowed Albanians to rebuilt their military potential using the resources remaining after Kosovo's KLA quite quickly – in a month.

Until the first decade of May 2000, they were able to reinforce the troops located in the Tetovo region and to focus almost 4 000 fighters, well equipped with light infantry weapons, in the region of Kumanovo, Matejche (Matejce) and Vaksintse (Vaksince). According to the data published by the Serbian Ministry of Internal Affairs in the "White Paper" of the conflict in Macedonia, a large group of volunteers from Bosnia, Sanjak (Sandžak), Turkey and Saudi Arabia was gathered in Macedonia creating one of the "fighters of God" units. Volunteers were recruited by one of a former KLA commanders – Daut Haradinaj.

The government forces also began preparing for the action against Albanian rebels. There was an active propaganda campaign initiated, aimed to isolate the insurgent leaders. The government assured that it would not talk with terrorists and demanded the

military solution prior to negotiations. The government media emphasized the criminal and terrorist nature of the insurgency. The public was to believe that the main purpose of Albanians is to create the "Great Kosovo" and the "Greater Albania". Further acts of terror were presented as a bloody revenge on the Slavic population. For the security forces and for the army it became obvious that any diplomacy will not solve the problem, and therefore decided to carry out a large anti-partisan operation leading to the isolation of individual pockets of resistance, which would then be disposed of by the special forces.

In addition, the Macedonian government asked Ukraine and Bulgaria for authorization to purchase weapons and equipment which would allow special forces and Macedonian army a successful conduct of operations against the rebels.

Action was resumed on 3<sup>rd</sup> of May 2001 after the incident, which resulted in several members of the special forces killed and three kidnapped. The attack on the convoy took place in the Vaksintse (Vaksince) village near Kumanovo.<sup>37</sup> The area was invaded by rebel forces. Initially KLA NMET announced that the attack on the convoy was a provocation of the government but later it was found out that it was a response to the former repressive measures taken by the attacked group of the security forces officers. In response, the government ordered the commencement of operations aimed at eliminating the rebel troops in the region of Kumanovo. Until the 7<sup>th</sup> of May special forces backed by helicopters Mi-24 and artillery took Slupchane (Slupcane), Orizari and Otlja, destroying several points of resistance and killing dozens of terrorists.

Offensive was continued, clearing the occupied villages. Then, for the first time, it was reported that the rebels use people as "human shields" in order to avoid artillery fire and attacks of the helicopters. On the 8<sup>th</sup> of May there was also an attack carried out on two KLA NMET bastions – Vaksintse (Vaksince) village and Lojane. Infantry and special forces backed by tanks, helicopters and transporters were forced to fight for every house. The municipalities were conquered after two whole weeks of fighting. In defence of the region the Albanian commander of the Kumanovo region – Fadil Nimani (Commandant "Tigri") was killed.

Macedonian soldiers had to fight both on land and underground, as the rebel strongholds were connected by underground tunnels, allowing to switch militants from one threatened position of the resistance to the other. After getting Vaksintse (Vaksince) and Lojane the government forces attacked the Slupchane (Slupcane) and Matejche (Matejce) which were actually occupied on the 29<sup>th</sup> of May. But it did not end the fighting in the area. Brigades backed with reinforcements from Kosovo came to counter-attack, leading offensive operations in the Slupchane (Slupcane)-Orizari-Otlja aiming to regain control of the village Matejche (Matejce).

In early June, the rebels struck again in the region of Tetovo, linking other units of the army and security forces of Macedonia on this area. However, this was not the attack that decided about the future of the conflict. On the 6<sup>th</sup> of June a rebel section consisting of several hundred people (probably it included a battalion/brigade sec-

<sup>37</sup> Z. Daskalovski, 'The Macedonian Conflict of 2001...', p. 8.

tion “Mujahedin”) took the Arachinovo (Aračinovo) village, located about 8 km from Skopje<sup>38</sup> from which you could shoot a mission-critical road that connected Skopje with Kumanovo. In this way, rebel forces threatened the country’s capital and partly controlled the strategic route connecting Macedonia with northern Europe. Moreover, the presence of the rebel forces in the region of Arachinovo (Aračinova) threatened the only source of drinking water for Skopje. The situation became so serious that the government ordered the chief of the General Staff general Pande Petrovski to perform the operation of eliminating the insurgency.

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> of June security forces and the Macedonian army began combat operations with an attack on the Arachinovo (Aračinovo) village. Resumption of military action led to another exodus of the civilian population, which, like several weeks before, was leaving their homes in fear of the parties of the conflict. The Macedonian population fled or was expelled by the rebels, while the Albanians left their homes in fear of security forces reprisals who rightly suspected that the majority of people in Albanian villages more or less actively support their brethren.<sup>39</sup>

The government forces’ attack was preceded by an artillery preparation and supported by attack helicopters Mi-24 (piloted by Ukrainian volunteers serving in the Macedonian Air Force). Despite this support, operators of the Special Forces Units “Tiger” and “Wolves” failed to stop the rebel defence line. The fighting lasting more than three days yielded a significant loss for the Albanians but did not result in success of the government troops.<sup>40</sup> Two days later the special forces invaded only the outer part, they failed to win with the Separatist forces and to conquer the village.<sup>41</sup> After crossing the first boundary, the Macedonian soldiers found another section of the resistance, created not only from fortifications but also from houses designed to defend. Battle groups had to fight for every house, eliminating some defence command posts and points.

Fighting in Arachinovo (Aračinovo) lasted despite the ongoing week of talks between the leaders of the Albanian political parties and the government. Only the intervention of Javier Solana and EU and NATO diplomacy led to a cease-fire. An extremely interesting fact was that the cease-fire took place just before the military and political pressure of NATO and EU on Skopje, just at the time when the Macedonian army troops were prepared for the final assault. After the cease-fire American infantry landed in the region of Arachinovo (Aračinovo) and the parachute units of KFOR came and formed a cordon around the village. Then the buses arrived and the rebels were loaded to drive off under escort in the direction of Kosovo.

<sup>38</sup> O. Valecki, ‘War in Macedonia...’; Z. Daskalovski, ‘The Macedonian Conflict of 2001...’, pp. 8-9.

<sup>39</sup> ‘Macedonia: Armia odnosi sukcesy, cywile uciekają’, RMF24, 26 May 2001, at <<http://www.rmf24.pl/fakty/news-macedonia-armia-odnosi-sukcesy-cywile-uciekaja,nId,146574>>, 12 December 2012.

<sup>40</sup> O. Valecki, ‘War in Macedonia...’

<sup>41</sup> ‘Macedońska armia zdobyła jedną trzecią Aracinova’, WP.pl, 23 June 2001, at <[http://wiadomosci.wp.pl/kat,1356,title,Macedonska-armia-zdobyła-jedna-trzecia-Aracinova,wid,180356,wiadomosc.html?tid=110b57&\\_tictsn=3](http://wiadomosci.wp.pl/kat,1356,title,Macedonska-armia-zdobyła-jedna-trzecia-Aracinova,wid,180356,wiadomosc.html?tid=110b57&_tictsn=3)>, 12 February 2013.



After hearing the news of the intervention of U.S. troops, there were riots in Skopje and other cities of Macedonia denouncing NATO's action. A part of the Macedonian military and independent experts believe that there were serious grounds for U.S. military intervention in Arachinovo (Aračinovo). According to anecdotal evidence, there were instructors of American military company MPRI staying in the village who were involved in training the KLA Kosovo separatists.<sup>42</sup>

The mission of the EU and NATO, which was able to negotiate a brief truce, in the coming days was trying to prevent the resumption of the fighting. However, these fights have never really been stopped because there were still battles fought, mainly along the border with Kosovo. Skopje accused KFOR authorities for not controlling KLA, thus contributing to the expansion of the conflict in Macedonia. The EU and NATO diplomats believed that further strengthening and increasing the involvement of the government forces would lead to open civil war, consequences of which are difficult to predict. According to Solana, and many other western experts not only Macedonia would sink into chaos. Most likely, standardization process in Kosovo would be threatened, and it is possible that there would be a collapse of the Dayton Agreement. It was feared that the Western Balkans would stand again in the heat of war and ethnic conflict.

Was it really going to happen anyway? Even today it is difficult to assess whether the Macedonian conflict could affect the escalation and the outbreak of subsequent military conflicts in other parts of the Balkans. Certainly, the Macedonian events were closely watched not only by the neighbouring countries. The conduct of the rebels and the lack of response from their patrons, especially the United States, were observed with anxiety. It was discussed whether the Macedonians would actually cope with the insurgency? Since a long time, American analysts have claimed that at this level of training and arming the Macedonians were not able to operate effectively against the partisans. One should agree with the assessment of the experts when it comes to lack

<sup>42</sup> Information about 26 citizens of the United States rescued during the fighting in the village by U.S. diplomat Glenn Ney can be found at The German Marshall Fund of the United States in the official biography of Ney. The question that we ask ourselves should be: Who were these "mysterious U.S. citizens" and what were they doing in the village where a hard-fought battle was held? Certainly they did not arrive on a humanitarian mission and were not journalists, as their stay was not publicized by the media. So who were these Americans? In other mass media it was claimed that they were employees of companies and tourists but it is impossible to find reliable sources to confirm this hypothesis. 'Expert Profiles: Glenn Nye', The German Marshall Fund of the United States, at <[http://www.gmfus.org/expert/experts\\_dir/glenn-nye/](http://www.gmfus.org/expert/experts_dir/glenn-nye/)>, 12 May 2013. Such a hypothesis was presented by journalists Mark Curtis and Scott Taylor. M. Curtis, *Secret Affairs. Britain's Collusion with Radical Islam*, London 2010, pp. 383-384; Б. Георгиевски, 'Како Глен нај ги спасувал американците од Арачиново', *Глобус*, 14 October 2008, at <<http://www.globusmagazin.com.mk/?ItemID=123A84A87F89AA4A87E4FF661DC50586>>, 12 May 2013. The presence of U.S. trainers is also mentioned by Michel Chossudovsky – Professor, University of Ottawa. Basing on the data of the Macedonian, Chossudovsky claimed that one of the managing directors of MPRI – Richard Griffiths was to receive information on the activities of special forces units from General Jovan Andrejevski and then to transmit them to the Albanian rebels. M. Chossudovsky, 'Macedonia: Washington's Military-Intelligence Ploy', *News Insider*, 5 July 2001, at <[http://www.newsinsider.org/editorials/intervention\\_in\\_Macedonia.html](http://www.newsinsider.org/editorials/intervention_in_Macedonia.html)>, 5 February 2013. The information (prosecution) relating to General Andrijevski appeared on TV AT-1, then in the Belgrade *Polititika*, the 22<sup>nd</sup> of May 2001, as well as in the Macedonian *Dnevnik* on the same day.



of preparation and having no specialized units trained in counterinsurgency operations. But you have to remember that the government in Skopje did not found allies in NATO nor in the EU. It should be noted that the governments of Western countries, especially the United States, for example, put pressure on Kiev to stop selling the weapons and equipment to Macedonia. It was claimed that stopping the supply of war materials could persuade Skopje to resume talks with the rebels and bring the conflict to an end. This policy should not be treated as a desire to help the Macedonians. And it was not the willingness of the West to help the Balkan communities to begin to live in peace. This hypocritical game rather aimed to save face and to hide the scale of the help that the governments of the West (mainly the U.S.) offered to the terrorists under the sign of KLA.

Macedonian leaders were forced to sit at the same table with the political representatives of the rebellion and to begin talks that would lead to the end of the conflict. The truce was negotiated. Troops were to withdraw from the strip of land occupied by the rebels stretching from Tetovo to the villages near Kumanovo. In some villages police stations were stationed.<sup>43</sup> The whole enclave was to be watched by the arbitration (3 000 soldiers). In addition, within 45 days peacemaking forces (chosen by NATO) had to disarm the rebel units.<sup>44</sup> However, this did not stop the fighting that was taking place with varying intensity until the middle of August 2001. Until the final suspension, Albanian terrorists launched attacks against security forces 140 times, while the Macedonians responded to the actions of rebels 74 times. There were also nearly 80 abductions, of which only 60 people returned to their homes (mostly Macedonians). Within two months, in July and August 2001, the government forces, despite the current cease-fire, conducted four major anti-rebel operations.

On the 7<sup>th</sup> of July, 2001 there was the first of a series of incidents involving insurgents. It was started by firing in the centre of Tetovo. A few hours later, the Albanians attacked police stations in the two Macedonian villages: Dzjermo (Gjermo) and Poroj. The rebel troops again occupied the village which they earlier had to leave and started to work on the construction of fortifications in the field. They created a strip of trenches and bunkers around Brezno, Varvara and Leshok (Lesok) villages.<sup>45</sup> The security forces, apart from a sporadic response to the Albanians' fire, did not lead operations against the rebels because of the fear that it would be used against Skopje. However, the actions of the KLA NMET were observed and believed to be a preparation for an operation on a large scale. A few days later, the rebel troops began to move from the occupied position, entering for example the suburb of Tetovo. At the same time, the villages occupied by the Macedonian population and police stations were still fired. Then the military authorities decided to give weapons to the villagers, so that they could create

<sup>43</sup> 'Безусловен прекин на огнот', *Вест*, 6 July 2001, at <<http://star.vest.com.mk/default.asp?id=11201&idg=2&idb=300&rubrika=Makedonija>>, 21 April 2013.

<sup>44</sup> 'Од полноќ прекин на огнот!', *Дневник*, 5 July 2001, at <<http://star.dnevnik.com.mk/?pBroj=1595&stID=1557>>, 12 April 2001.

<sup>45</sup> It should be noted that before the outbreak of the revolt the villages were mostly inhabited by the Macedonians who were exiled or left the houses for fear of reprisals from terrorists after the fighting.

a local self-defence force. On the 9<sup>th</sup> of July general P. Petrovski, in consideration of increasing incidents of armed military troops, ordered to open fire against the rebels who have walked 200m away from the demilitarized zone. The firing and the increasing incidents continued until the end of July.

On the 21<sup>st</sup> of July security forces of the Macedonian Ministry of Interior observed that two KFOR helicopters dropped two containers in the area occupied by the troops of the KLA NMET. KFOR action took place without the consent of Skopje. After the intervention the command of KFOR explained that this was the delivery for the international forces.<sup>46</sup> These explanations do not and did not sound believable. Unfortunately, currently we are not able to explain what these boxes contained and who was the real recipient. This is another unexplained "mystery" of the conflict.

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> of July NMET KLA forces attacked police stations in Tetovo and surrounding villages. At the same time they launched an attack in the city centre, quickly conquering the suburbs. On the same day, the Minister of Internal Affairs of Macedonia issued a call to stop the fighting and ordered the Albanians to withdraw from the city. At the same time he threatened to use the army to restore peace. The response to the appeal of the Macedonian authorities was increased terrorists' fire. On the 24<sup>th</sup> of July the security forces and the Macedonian army moved to counterattacks. There was heavy fighting in the centre and around the stadium in Tetovo, while the security forces and the police blocked the Albanian brigades in villages surrounding Tetovo. The army began a harassing artillery firing preventing the delivery of food and ammunition to the rebels fighting in the city. On the night of 24<sup>th</sup> of July the fighting was brought to an end. The fortification work began on the area occupied by the rebels. Similar protection measures were created on the government side. Albanians once again renewed their attempt to control the city. On the 7<sup>th</sup> of August they conducted the last attack, which, however, was repulsed.<sup>47</sup> During the fighting in July about 20 insurgents were killed, including a Tetovo's cluster commander "Roki" (actually Rahim Beqiri living in Kosovo, a member of the KLA). The losses on the government side were small (about 10 killed and wounded policemen). A number of accidents with the active participation of the Albanian terrorist groups also took place in August.

In the consideration of the rising tide of terror the Ministry of Interior tried to persuade president B. Trajkovski to give the permission to carry out military operations and restore power in areas of the country occupied by Albanians. It was especially important because another incidents and fights for Tetovo in July showed that

<sup>46</sup> Д. Николовски, 'Хеликоптер на КФОР испуштил мистериозен товар на Шара', *Дневник*, 23 July 2001, at <<http://star.dnevnik.com.mk/?pBroj=1609&stID=2224>>, 3 June 2013; С. Колевска, 'Хеликоптери на КФОР испуштија контејнери во Шипковица и во Бродец', *Вест*, 23 July 2001, at <<http://star.vest.com.mk/default.asp?id=11987&cidg=2&idb=314&rubrika=Makedonija>>, 3 June 2013; idem, 'КФОР призна за хеликоптерите, ама крие што носеле', *Вест*, 24 July 2001, at <<http://star.vest.com.mk/default.asp?id=12119&cidg=2&idb=315&rubrika=Makedonija>>, 3 June 2013.

<sup>47</sup> С. Тоевски, 'ОНА не го почитуваше прекилот на огно', *Вест*, 7 July 2001, at <<http://star.vest.com.mk/default.asp?id=11216&cidg=2&idb=301&rubrika=Makedonija>>, 3 June 2013; 'Терористите го сардисаа Лешок, селаните сами се бранат', *Дневник*, 9 July 2001, at <<http://star.dnevnik.com.mk/?pBroj=1596&stID=1563>>, 3 June 2013.

the Albanians are not seeking to end the conflict and do not want the demilitarization but they prepare for future fights. General Staff of Macedonia under the command of gen. P. Petrovski prepared a plan of operations – “Polog”. However, it was not accepted by Trajkovski, who believed that NATO and the EU would lead to a peaceful resolution of the conflict. Meanwhile, at the beginning of August a terrorist group consisting of 10 people planning attacks on the government offices, police and military facilities was shattered in Skopje. During the action the special forces killed five terrorists.<sup>48</sup> On the 8<sup>th</sup> of August there was a KLA NMET attack on a military convoy on the way to Tetova, in which 10 Macedonian soldiers were murdered. On the next day, Albanian terrorists kidnapped several workers on the road Tetovo-Jazhince and freed them after beating and mutilating them. After these incidents, general Petrovski gave the order to start clearing the territory of Tetovo-Jazhince from terrorist groups and troops. After several hours of fighting the area was cleared and the ARM sapper troops began to remove mines.<sup>49</sup>

The biggest battle of the last phase of the civil war in Macedonia in 2001 was the so-called Battle at Radusha (Raduša: a mountain village near the border with Kosovo). Fighting around the village and the surrounding mountains lasted from the beginning of the conflict with a varying intensity. The most intense operations were carried out in late June. The fighting was resumed on the 10<sup>th</sup> of August. Then, KLA NMET troops started to attack from the area of Krivenik in Kosovo.<sup>50</sup> The terrorists attacked a police station in the Radusha (Raduša) village with 35 people inside with mortar fire. As far as one can tell according to the Macedonian intelligence, the attack was carried out by about 600 terrorists whose main aim was to control Skopje's drinking water intake located in the region of Rashche (Rašče) village.<sup>51</sup> The Macedonian authorities took action immediately. They used a special forces' group named “Tiger”, operators of which had to defend the intake of drinking water. The second group had to unlock and strengthen police officers who fought in Raduša overwhelmed by terrorists. Skopje addressed a letter to the secretary of United Nations, Kofi Annan, in which the concern about the inaction of a state and organisation of a common security in the presence of repeated acts of terrorism and hostilities of the inhabitants of the area controlled by the United Nations was expressed.

On the 11<sup>th</sup> of August the Albanians renewed the attack, hitting also the border post between the Kuchkovo (Kučkovo) and Radusha (Raduša) villages. In this way they planned to acquire a village, eliminating border posts and police stations and broadening the control over the area extending from Tetovo to Lipkovo, which would create

<sup>48</sup> ‘Во Чаир застрелани петмина припадници на ОНА’, *Вест*, 8 August 2001, at <<http://star.vest.com.mk/default.asp?id=12774&idg=2&idb=325&rubrika=Makedonija>>, 3 June 2013.

<sup>49</sup> ‘Патот Тетово-Јажинце ослободен’, *Дневник*, 11 August 2001, at <<http://star.dnevnik.com.mk/default.aspx?pbroj=1623&stID=2905>>, 3 June 2013.

<sup>50</sup> J. Kim, ‘Macedonia: Country Background and Recent Conflict’, CRS Report for Congress, RL30900, 7 November 2001, at <<http://www.fas.org/man/crs/RL30900.pdf>>, 2 March 2013.

<sup>51</sup> Р. Митевски, И.К. Илиевски, ‘Заробени дваесетина терористи’, *Дневник*, 13 August 2001, at <<http://star.dnevnik.com.mk/?pBroj=1624&stID=2929>>, 3 June 2013.

a “liberated area” in the north-western Macedonia.<sup>52</sup> Within a few more days, on 12<sup>nd</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> of August, the rebels repeated the attacks on the defending troops. At the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> of August the army and special forces joined the fight backed by aircraft and attack helicopters (Sukhoi Su-25 and Mil Mi-24). Despite the lack of coordination between the police and the ARM troops, the government forces managed to eliminate the blockade of a border police station in Radusha (Raduša), and then to discard the rebel forces. Some Albanians crossed the border with Kosovo, while others occupied the bunkers and fortifications around the border villages. It was one of the biggest success of the government forces since the beginning of the conflict in Macedonia. KLA NMET suffered heavy losses in men and equipment. The breakdown of rebel group brought a big propaganda and psychological success. It showed that the tenacious and determined fight against terrorists might succeed.

The last operation of the security forces was an action in Luboten (Ljuboten) village and surrounding areas. During the Battle at Radusha (Raduša) – on the 10<sup>th</sup> of August in the area of Luboten (Ljuboten) village on the way to Lubca (Ljubca) there was a terrorist attack on a military convoy, when eight Macedonian soldiers were killed.<sup>53</sup> On the next day a patrol coming to the Luboten (Ljuboten) village was shot at by a group of terrorists using mortar grants. Then, the Ministry of Interior ordered to introduce the special forces unit named “Lions” to the fight (it was a half paramilitary unit consisting of volunteers who were on contract with the Ministry of the Interior). They were supported by artillery fire and by helicopters Mil Mi-24. The impact of special forces was precise and destroyed four houses on the outskirts of the village. Some of the houses – points of resistance – were isolated by special groups and then acquired during a simultaneous assault. The operation was completed on the 12<sup>th</sup> of August. Seven terrorists were killed.<sup>54</sup> After the end of elimination of rebel groups, security forces arrested more than 100 villagers from Luboten (Ljuboten) and Mirkovci, rightly suspecting that supporters and collaborators of the killed hid among them. There was a questioning, which resulted in beating several people. After the investigation, 27 people were convicted for collaborating with terrorists.

After the end of the Radusha (Raduša) and Luboten (Ljuboten) operation, Macedonian Ministry of Interior planned to carry out the final operation, which was to put an end to the conflict and to eliminate the KLA NMET. The action did not took place because politicians from Skopje and the Albanian opposition found a common agreement, which resulted in the signing of the Ohrid agreement. Although some incidents occurred, the agreement ending the conflict, or rather freezing it, became a reality. Interruption of action introduced a gradually calming mood but did not resolve the main conflict-factor – mutual distrust and hatred.

<sup>52</sup> S. Ordanoski, ‘Radusha Battle’, Форм.com.mk, 2 December 2004, at <<http://www.ex-yupress.com/mkforum/mkforum14.html>>, 4 June 2013.

<sup>53</sup> ‘Soldiers Killed in Macedonia Blast’, CNN, 10 August 2001, at <<http://edition.cnn.com/2001/WORLD/europe/08/10/macedonia.planes.1738/index.html?s=PM:WORLD>>, 23 May 2013; J. Kim, ‘Macedonia...’, s. 8; ‘Macedonian Troops Killed by Landmine’, BBC, 10 August 2001, at <<http://www.balkanpeace.org/index.php?index=article&articleid=8014>>, 23 May 2013.

<sup>54</sup> According to other data five terrorists were killed. J. Kim, ‘Macedonia ...’, p. 8.

## CONCLUSION

The threat of destabilisation of the Macedonian state is still valid. Former KLA NMET structures were partially disassembled but some of them were converted into ANA. Arbitration forces also failed to disarm the rebels. A large amount of equipment and weapons was hidden. Despite of the numerous international initiatives and progressive (but also illusory) stability, ethnic and political conflict has been deferred and it is only a matter of time for someone to reopen the Macedonian "Pandora's box".

Anti-rebel activities led by the security forces and the army during the three phases of the conflict were uncoordinated and extremely cautious. The newly established Macedonian army and police were not fully prepared to pursue classical asymmetric operations as part of counter-terrorism operations and counterinsurgency. Expenditures that were to support the development and training of the armed forces allowed to keep only a small number of units, equipped mainly with light and heavy infantry weapons. The police was also underinvested. There were also no special anti-terrorist units organised, although the Macedonians, like the other members of the republican OT structures from the times of the former Federation, had experience in this area. In the first phase of the battle the structures of intelligence and counterintelligence assessment failed to obtain the information that it might come to the outbreak of the rebellion on a large scale. Management of the Ministry of Interior also did not manage to rise to the task, mistakenly believing that the first occurrences are rather incidents than organized action, when in fact the rebellion had been carefully planned in advance, as evidenced by the following facts:

- well-functioning structures had a significant amount of light and heavy infantry weapons and supplies necessary to conduct a long-term struggle;
- flexible use of well-thought tactics of connected terrorists' and guerrilla's activities;
- the campaign propaganda activities ensuring almost one hundred percent support of the Albanian community in Macedonia prepared before and during the conflict;
- taking advantage of the weakness of the enemy and acting by surprise;
- high level of experience of the commanders and fighters.

In the course of action Macedonians committed a number of errors both in the preparation, planning and in the execution of the anti-rebel operation. One of the biggest mistakes were actions consisting of "extinguishing" the isolated incidents, and not of carrying out one or two serious operations. Lack of strategic decision on the part of the government was certainly one of the most important reasons for the decision-making level. The Macedonian government not only knew nothing about the impending danger but also played down the first signals. Therefore, we can say that the government needs to monitor the situation constantly and react to incidents as soon as possible. The Macedonians should be aware that everything that happens in the Balkans, is roughly similar to developments in connected vessels; that borders in the Balkans do not con-



stitute any obstacles and are not permanent. Everything in the Balkan world is possible. Estimation of a potential enemy will also be without any meaning. Whether it be a non-sovereign, partisan, terrorist or rebel group, does not mean anything. Important is the fact that they will be as dangerous to the sovereignty of the Republic of Macedonia as allegedly terminated KLA NMET.

The Security System of the Republic of Macedonia must be constructed so that at the start of the rebellion all subsystems could be able to counter the threat effectively. Therefore, it is necessary for Macedonia to cooperate between its security forces and neighbours. It is necessary to build a military infrastructure, to be able to use it to manoeuvre troops and special forces. In the light of the experience of conflict, the training of units to fight in the city and in the field is essential. And, in addition, organisation and equipment of specialized anti-terrorist troops and counterinsurgency, which could operate both with the police (or with the Ministry of Interior), as well as with the armed forces.

An important element is to improve the image of the forces involved in the fight against the rebels. Information activities in these types of operations are as important as military. A proper informing of the public and worlds public opinion allows to build confidence for the conduct of government forces. It does not create the atmosphere of a helplessness submission, does not decrease the confidence in the state authorities. Therefore, the psychological and propaganda factors can be used in both internal and external policy of the state.

Most of the factors listed above affecting the asymmetric operations-counterinsurgency in Macedonia in 2001, were not taken into account and never used in practice. This had to entail inefficiency of the counter-insurgency operations of the government forces as the rebels applied factors that influence the success of a guerrilla war. However, you cannot (as some American experts believe) claim that the diplomatic activities of the NATO and EU mission and the reaction of KFOR and the KFOR forces saved Macedonia from the civil war and from a disaster in a confrontation with the KLA NMET. This is, in fact, a substantial simplification aiming, first and foremost, to excuse the often unilateral and pro-Albanian policy of the western countries, primarily of the United States pursuing the interests of a great power on the old continent. People in the Balkans are most likely to pay a high price in the near future for such a lack of forward-looking thinking.

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