

A Civil Alternative. An Evaluation of the IOM KPC Program.

By Anna Di Lellio

I. Summary

The Kosovo Protection Corps (KPC) was officially constituted in January 2000 as a main feature of the Demilitarization, Demobilization and Reintegration of thousands of Kosovo Liberation Army's (KLA) combatants. The IOM Training program started in February 2000 with the goal to build the KPC into a viable and effective protection organization responsive to civil authorities.

Background information about the program is provided in the Introduction, with a brief discussion of its design and implementation. In the following chapters, a detailed presentation of the program's direct products, or outputs, will be found. What follows is an evaluation of the reintegration program, and specifically an answer to the questions:

1. Has the IOM KPC Training program succeeded in achieving its main objective?
2. How has the reintegration of KLA demobilized combatants, through the establishment and the development of the KPC, contributed to a stable and secure environment in Kosovo?
3. Keeping in mind that there is no blue print for reintegration, as the environmental conditions greatly vary, what can be learned from the KPC experience that could be applied elsewhere?

In order to answer these questions, it is necessary to evaluate both the implementation of the program and its impact.

Program Implementation

Four years after its establishment, the KPC has developed a sizable track record of interventions in civil emergencies and a positive public image as a professional civil protection organization. By any reasonable standard, the IOM KPC Training program has achieved its goal.

Measured against key issues in reintegration programs, it was well designed and implemented.

- It developed local ownership, creating the conditions for self-sufficiency.
- It demonstrated flexibility in its initial design and the capacity of adapting to change.

- It provided high quality training as well as continuity, through skilled and committed IOM staff.
- It promoted reconciliation, through reconstruction work in minority communities.
- It ensured coordination by widely consulting but also keeping the organization of training and capacity building well centralized.

Program Impact

The KPC Team reintegration program had an important impact on maintaining a secure and stable environment in Kosovo.

- By starting very quickly and efficiently after demilitarization and demobilization, the program has engaged the KPC at all levels, and contributed to improving local stability.
- In the initial phase, when ethnic-based conflict still flared in nearby countries, the IOM team significantly contributed to ensure the success of the KLA demobilization through a multi-layered program based on training, management advisory and deployment abroad
- The program has given the KPC the instruments to become a self-sufficient civil emergency organization and to provide civil emergency services on a regional scale. A critical question is that the KPC holds the longer-term goal of becoming the Kosovo army. This aspiration is at odds with its officially mandated mission, and although it represented a complicating factor, it did not hinder reintegration, thanks to the strong support given to the IOM program by the KPC leadership.

Lessons to be drawn from the IOM KPC Program

Although the IOM KPC program was developed in a unique context, it provides useful suggestions for other reintegration cases.

In the first place, it confirms the importance of some general features of successful reintegration: namely, the flexibility of program's design and implementation, the focus on professionalism and engagement, and the development of local ownership.

Most importantly, it shows how by establishing a direct link between training, capacity building, and employment, a reintegration program could be successful even in the context of great political uncertainty and instability. Necessary ingredients of this success are a centralized organization of the program and the local leadership's strong support.

In particular, the IOM KPC program is a showcase for the unique experiment of linking the reintegration of demobilized combatants to the creation of a socially useful organization such as a civil emergency agency. This experiment could serve as a model for any post-conflict society with great needs for structural reconstruction and confidence building.

Methodology

The evaluation of IOM KPC Program is qualitative. A single investigator conducted the research.

The methodology is based on “triangulation,” that is on multiple data sources: interviews with IOM and KPC officers as well as international and local leaders; the literature and media on the KPC in Albanian, Serbian and other languages; participant observation; primary source data from IOM, the UN and KFOR; and IOM funded focus groups conducted by Gani Bobi.

II. Program Implementation

The KPC Today

Every Thursday morning, in Gjilan, the Commander of KPC Protection Zone 6, Imri Ilazi, gathers all his Brigade and Unit Commanders in the largest room of a former factory; on the agenda, the management of the Zone’s projects and training. Ilazi has a ready smile and a quiet demeanor, but there is nothing relaxed about his questioning of the Commanders on their progress. He matches their answers against a matrix that details objectives, man-hours, and timelines, while pressing those officers who have nothing on their hands that particular week.

On a busy Thursday, PZ 6 discusses the completion of one major project and the start of three new ones.¹ The fire station of Kamenica, a nearby village where a sizable Serb community is still living, is about to be inaugurated at the presence of the Brigade who built it. The KPC has supplied labor and engineering skills, IOM the necessary financing. The Commander urges everybody to be present and look their best, with uniforms freshly washed and ironed.

¹ PZ 6 weekly meeting, Gjilan, October 2, 2003.

There is more work in the plans, always with IOM support. Novo Brdo, a mountain village, whose mayor is a Serb woman, will be glad to have the KPC build a fire station there too. Water does not easily reach the village's schools; the KPC will be able to fix the supply system. Podgorce, a Serb community administered by the city of Viti and classified as a priority by the UN Office of Returns, needs water as well, and the KPC has offered to build the supply. "Have you estimated the budget for the project?" Ilazi asks the civil engineer of Viti's municipality. Marcel Ferrere, a Major of the Pennsylvania National Guard and the KFOR Inspector of Zone 6, raises the possibility that one excavator might not be sufficient for three new projects. Myfail Kqiku, the IOM local officer, reassures him, by calculating, in a brief exchange with Ilazi, for how long will the heavy equipment be used at any time; it will be a stretch, but it can be done.

On the wall of the conference room, a poster with the next 90-day training plan reminds everyone of the tasks ahead. The IOM officer used to prepare the schedule. Now, the KPC training officer does it himself. Before the war, Imri Ilazi was a physical education teacher forced to immigrate to Germany. Like many of his men, he had no experience in managing an organization, let alone a civil emergency agency. In fact, only one year ago the meeting described above would not have taken place in that particular fashion.

Learning how to manage and finding the enthusiasm to rebuild infrastructure in minority communities has taken time, effort, and considerable willpower before the same men who four years ago fought the Milosevic-led Belgrade government in the KLA, and now dream of becoming the future defense force of an independent Kosovo, could start toiling on behalf of their Serb neighbors. It also took the program of mentoring, training and financial support put in place by the IOM team.

Certainly, the KPC is not yet developed as a fully-fledged civil emergency service. It still depends on international experts for training and advise. It lacks equipment and infrastructure. Minority recruitment is making progress, but has not reached the target of 10% of the Corps. While led by a respected former officer of the Yugoslavian Army, Lt Gen Çeku, the KPC leadership overall has still to improve the required capacities to manage about 3,000 members with varying degrees of skills.²

However, the KPC looks like and is a civilian organization, performing emergency management service. It is readily identified as such in focus groups conducted among Kosovo Albanians across the province. Those who are better acquainted with the organization recognize the KPC's engagement in serving communities. The image of KPC members involved in construction, firefighting, and road repair, is regularly shown on public television during news hours or in the dedicated biweekly Sunday program, and confirms/reinforces those first hand observations.³

² Comments derived from a series of interviews with the KPC Coordinator 2002-2003, Maj Gen Andrew Cumming.

³ Gani Bobi, *The KPC and Its Future. Kosovo Citizens' Perspectives and Opinions*, Sept-Oct 2003.

It is not just a matter of image. Although young, the KPC has established a sizable track record, more than 100 interventions in civilian emergencies until the end of 2003.⁴ The rescue activities in the earthquake of Gjilan, the management of the fire at the Kosova B power plant, the ongoing de-mining work and the public health service provided by the Medical Battalion in rural areas, deserve a separate mention for their professionalism and visibility. That the KPC is well on its way to fulfill the Standards set by the UN for Kosovo is yet another testimony of the progress made until now.

The IOM KPC Program

Measured against key issues in reintegration programs, the IOM KPC Program is quite successful.⁵

Local ownership

It is recognized that local ownership enhances the probability of success. IOM has worked in close contact with the ex-combatants at all levels in the KPC and has involved them in the program, by providing in-house training and advise as well as by “training the trainers.” While the organization is not able yet to be self-sufficient, this policy has developed a good degree of cooperation and a sense of ownership. At the School of Civil Protection, former students are now teaching some basic classes. Significantly, in stark departure from more military style celebrations of previous years, the 2003 Albanian patriotic anniversary of Flag Day took place on the grounds of the Academy, where KPC cadets demonstrated their skills under the joint supervision of IOM and KPC instructors.

Flexibility

The design of the program showed from the start a high degree of flexibility, with its articulation in different phases and its multiple components of training, humanitarian assistance, out-of-country deployments, institution building, and international cooperation. In addition, the IOM team had the ability to understand when things were not working in the right way, and the flexibility to change the program accordingly. The most notable example is the development of the concept of Management Advisory Teams early on. When it became clear that training was not enough to develop specific skills, embedded IOM advisors supplied the necessary support to the organization’s weak management.

⁴ See KPC, Department of Operation Report on operations and real interventions by the KPC during the period 2000-2003, October 2003.

⁵ See *A Framework for Lasting Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration of Former Combatants in Crisis Situations*, International Peace Academy Workshop Report, Dec 2002.

Quality of Training

Civil Protection was a state activity in former Yugoslavia, where what was called “territorial defense” was organized in a paramilitary fashion. The training provided by IOM and the education delivered in the School of Civil Protection, tailored to a civilian organization, has moved the KPC closer to European standards. Evidence suggests that the KPC has enjoyed the best quality instructions available not only in Kosovo, but probably in the region. Other Kosovo civil emergency services are starting to train their members in the Academy. Instructors from the College of Civil Defense in Ankara recently visited the KPC to observe and learn vehicle extrication techniques. Finally, inspection reports of field training exercises or KPC readiness compiled by KFOR contingents from different countries register a satisfactory level of individual expertise.⁶

IOM Staff

IOM staff is highly trained and with experience in the region. About half of the team worked in Kosovo for the past four years and joined the program at an early stage, with a core group that started at the very beginning. This staff has ensured continuity in the context of a fast changing environment. Contrast the consistency of the IOM presence, for example, with the quick turn over at KFOR, the only other organization that in the initial phase was at least partially engaged in training the KPC: tours of duty last a maximum of six months, while the Commander of the Force serves for one year and brings a strong personal style of leadership. This creates serious problems for consistency of policy direction.

Coordination

Coordination with UNMIK and KFOR has proved to be very valuable, especially at the start of the program. The synergy with the IOM Information, Counseling and Referral Service (ICRS) has been as important in this crucial phase. There were no delays in developing the registration and demobilization of thousands of KLA fighters. Within five months the registration drive was complete. In less than two months, IOM also managed to select the first list of candidates to the KPC. As early as June 2000, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan claimed the transformation of the KLA into the KPC as one of the achievements of UNMIK.⁷

Later on, IOM has continued to operate in consultation with UNMIK and KFOR and collaborated with Civil Protection Agencies outside of Kosovo, an important partnership that helped prepare the training curriculum at the School of Civil Protection, among other things. IOM has collaborated with the CoE EUR- OPA Major Hazards Agreement

⁶ Conversations with KPC Coordinator 2002-2003, Maj Gen Andrew Cumming.

⁷ See Annan, as quoted in The Independent International Commission on Kosovo, *The Kosovo Report*, Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 107. For timing and coordination, a comparison with East Timor is appropriate: see Conflict, Security and Development Group, King’s College London, *A Review of Peace Operations: a Case for Change. East Timor*, March 2003, paragraphs 54-57.

Committee in designing the School of Civil Protection's classes, thereby ensuring high standards of training.

Reconciliation

IOM has tried to combine reintegration and reconciliation through works of reconstruction in minority communities. Although only half of the required 10% minorities positions have been filled, this program has made some significant, albeit limited inroads, in communities where the image of the KPC is extraordinarily negative for the following reasons: because of its roots in the Albanian insurgency; for its ideological portrayal by the Serb media before and after the fall of Milosevic; and for the pressure from the Serb political leadership to stop cooperating with Kosovo institutions.⁸

Issues Beyond the IOM team's responsibility

The IOM KPC Program managed to achieve its objective despite several impeding factors. Uneven coordination and planning as well as lack of funding, all issues beyond the IOM team's responsibility, have certainly represented serious problems for the development of the KPC.

Uneven coordination and planning

While IOM has engaged in many collaborative efforts, higher levels of planning and coordination have come late. Still missing today is broad based planning to encourage local ownership.

The KPC is a reserved power under the authority of the SRSG and the supervision of KFOR. UNMIK, which was not mandated to oversee demobilization and reintegration, exercised at best an erratic control role, until the establishment of the UN Office of the KPC Coordinator at the end of 2002.⁹ KFOR, whose mission has changed more rapidly than the UN's, has also implemented remarkably drastic changes in policy toward the

⁸ See Jelena Bjelica, "Presentation and Representation of the KPC in the Serb Print Media," Sept. 2003, a research focusing on the period after the fall of Milosevic and the putative end of his authoritarian regime. This research shows that no allegation of KPC criminal and terrorist activity is backed by any evidence. Quite disturbingly, the free use of hate speech and speculative reporting show a clear continuity with previous practices, the reasons being either the lingering of Milosevic's anti-Albanian ideology, or simply lack of professionalism among journalists, compounded by the fact that media, especially the state-owned media, have never been lustrated. For political pressure on Kosovo Serbs, see OSCE Mission in Kosovo, *Parallel Institutions in Kosovo*, October 2003.

⁹ For the inadequacy of UNMIK overseeing and planning functions, see Conflict, Security and Development Group, King's College London, *A Review of Peace Operations: a Case for Change. Kosovo*, March 2003, paragraph 100. On the Establishment of the KPC Coordinator see Terms of Reference of the KPC Coordinator, 1 April 2003.

KPC. In 2003, it has moved from close involvement with the KPC to a mere role of inspection and control, relinquishing a commitment made at the time of demobilization.¹⁰

Provincial institutions have remained, and continue to remain, excluded from any oversight of the KPC. In the recently formed Civil Protection Development Group, a commission including the highest international civilian and military authorities, no provincial institution is represented.¹¹

The lack of an integrated strategy encompassing economic development, justice and reconciliation at the provincial level is another problem to be emphasized. Attempting reconciliation by giving former combatants the lead on humanitarian projects would have certainly proved more fruitful, had it been part of a better and broader policy. At times the KPC has found more obstacles among international actors than rival ethnic communities. In the case of Novake (Prizren) for example, Serb community leaders had to overrule KFOR opposition against the use of KPC engineers, and gave precedence to reconstruction over purported security concerns surrounding the building of a water pipeline.¹²

Lack of Funding

Under financing is a problem that has slowed down the development of the KPC from the start and continues to do so. In a comprehensive assessment of security in the Balkans published in 2001, the International Crisis Group ironically commented that for an instant transformation of KLA combatants into “model firefighters and ambulance persons,” much more attention should have been paid to adequate financing of the KPC.¹³

Until the end of 2003, the IOM program could only count on the support of the US Government. Further donations for infrastructure and equipment have not been forthcoming. The same KFOR reports which attest KPC members’ individual expertise show that, with the exception of some specific problems of command and control, the KPC’s failure to perform even better is very often due to lack of equipment.¹⁴

III. Beyond Implementation, Measuring Impact

In order to measure the IOM program’s overall success at reintegration realistically, we must account for its impact on the goals of the demobilization of the KLA, and thus consider broader factors that are beyond the direct control of the program.

¹⁰ The delineation of KFOR responsibilities and role in building the KPC were defined in the *Memorandum of Understanding Between the Commander of KFOR and the SRSG Concerning the Kosovo Protection Corps*, signed also in 1999.

¹¹ See Terms of Reference and Composition of the CPDG, 13 Feb 2003.

¹² Conversations with Jeremy Haslam, IOM Trust Fund Manager, September 2003.

¹³ ICG, *After Milosevic. A Practical Agenda for Lasting Balkans Peace*, 2001: pp. 92-93

¹⁴ See fn. 6

In the immediate aftermath of the NATO bombing campaign, there was an overall need: with the withdrawal of the Yugoslavian forces, the legitimate monopoly of violence had to be reserved to the NATO mission. This meant that the only armed forces on the ground, the KLA, had to be de-militarized and demobilized.

The means to accomplish this goal was to give KLA fighters priority in the selection process for the newly constituted police forces (KPS), while a significant portion of the KLA leadership and ranks would be absorbed into the KPC. The KPC was established as an emergency service agency, but its aspiration to become an army was kept alive during the tense negotiation between NATO leaders and the Commanders of the KLA; it was formalized in the agreement; and it was publicly stated by the KLA leadership.¹⁵

This ambiguity surrounding the establishment of the KPC is reflected in the form it took, including the name of the organization, which plays on the two meanings of the Albanian word *mbrojtje* (protection and defense),¹⁶ or the use of military ranks and insignia similar to the KLA's. It was at the time an acceptable compromise, which made it possible for the KLA leadership to persuade most of the rank and file to buy into the process of demilitarization, a goal achieved after an intense internal debate, not a result to be taken for granted.¹⁷

For the international community, the goals of the agreement were:

- avoid the possibility that the guerrillas could turn into a “Kosovo Taliban” force, potentially dangerous for their former allies;¹⁸
- offset short-term security threats;
- provide longer-term reintegration into civilian life through the creation of a civil emergency agency.

While the first two were clear from the start, the third was transformed by the terms and the implementation of the agreement and became a medium-term “truce” until the definition of Kosovo political status.

During this “truce,” competing interpretations of the compromise reached with the creation of the KPC, based on a fundamental disagreement on the Kosovo conflict and its dynamics, have consolidated.

¹⁵ *Undertaking of Demilitarization and Transformation by the UÇK*, June 1999, esp. 25 (b): “The Army of Kosovo on the lines of the US National Guard” would be formed “in due course.” Besides public statements made at the time by KPC Commander Agim Çeku and recorded by media, see: James Pettifer, *A Concept for a New Reality. Dialogue with Hashim Thaqi*, 2001, p. 37; Bardh Hamzaj, *A Narrative About War and Freedom (Dialogue with the Commander Ramush Haradinaj)*, Zeri 2000, p. 168.

¹⁶ Trupat e Mbrojtjes së Kosovës.

¹⁷ See Safet Zejnullahu, *War for Kosova (Commander Remi Speaks)* Zëri, 2001, p. 117: “not the objective we wanted, it was the possible one.” Also Madeleine Albright, *Madam Secretary. A Memoir*, Miramax, 2003, p. 425.

¹⁸ This concern is highlighted in *The Kosovo Report*, p. 119.

There are critics who consider this compromise unhelpful at best, insufficiently linked to serious political considerations, and in utter disregard of international laws.¹⁹ For Serb authorities, the KLA is and will always be an illegitimate challenger of Serbia's sovereignty over Kosovo, and thus they equate it with terrorism and crime, a sufficient reason to reject the whole idea of the KPC.²⁰ For other critics, the denial of any KLA strategic role during the NATO campaign renders any KLA role in post-conflict inappropriate.

There is also the opposite criticism, reflecting a widespread opinion among the Kosovo Albanian public that judges the KLA's demilitarization negatively. Indifferently from their political orientation, participants in focus groups across Kosovo say that the establishment of the KPC represented "a betrayal," "a manipulation," "a humiliation," and "a mistake." They perceive the KPC as the marginalization of freedom fighters - an imposition and at best a temporary solution - because their destiny is to form the army of Kosovo.²¹

This is not the place to enter into a detailed discussion of such contradictory views. It will suffice to say that informed sources and interviews with the protagonists of that history provide convincing evidence confirming NATO's view of the KLA as an ally in 1999, and the KLA view of itself as such. The current director of the KPC Simulation Center, a former art teacher, was drafted by the KLA to fill the position of map-reader in order to convey target coordinates to their base commanders, who in turn related the information to NATO military authorities. The use that the NATO leadership made of such information is less certain, but it does not change the relationship established with the KLA at the time, or the perception of it.²²

To conclude, evaluating the impact of the IOM program against the objectives of KLA demobilization and reintegration into civilian life through the establishment of the KPC, has to take into account broader factors, such as the Kosovo conflict dynamics. These factors are not and never could be under the direct control of IOM.

¹⁹ Carlotta Gall, "Russia Assails Accord for new Kosovo Force," *International Herald Tribune*, September 23, 1999; Fabio Mini, *La Guerra Dopo la Guerra*, Einaudi, 2003, p. 228; Andreas Heinemann-Gruder and Wolf Christian-Paes, *Wag the Dog: The Mobilization and Demobilization of the Kosovo Liberation Army*, Brief 20, BICC, 2001.

²⁰ See Republic of Serbia, *Albanian Terrorism and Organized Crime in Kosovo and Metohija*, Belgrade, September 2003. This publication made a clear connection between all forms of crime in Kosovo, the KLA and the KPC.

²¹ *The KPC and Its Future*, 2003.

²² Benjamin Lambeth, *NATO's Air War for Kosovo: A Strategic and Operational Assessment*, Rand Corporation, 2001, pp. 53- 54; Daalder Ivo and Michael O'Hanlon, *Winning Ugly: NATO's War to Save Kosovo*, The Brookings Institution, 2000, p. 152-53. Tim Judah, *Kosovo. War and Revenge*, Yale University Press, 2000, pp. 266-267 on NATO commanders' wariness of using the information coming from the ground for fear of interferences by Serbian intelligence. Albright recalls the US even discussed of arming the KLA but then decided not to, out of concern that it would split the Alliance, p. 411.

First Objective: avoid the possibility of a “Kosovo Taliban” force

The KLA could have represented a threat to the international presence in Kosovo, whose arrival had caused the withdrawal of Serb forces, but had also coincided with the establishment of a UN-led administration, and thus fallen much short of the goal of Kosovo independence.

The ICRS IOM program started with a very inclusive registration process and immediately engaged anyone who claimed to be a former fighter, both the core group and the more peripheral members.²³ By involving the KLA in a process of demobilization that widely recognized their role of insurgents, IOM avoided the creation of marginal and disgruntled groups, which could have posed serious threats to the international presence in Kosovo, in contrast with other post-conflict situations.

The timing was also important. When the decision to demilitarize the KLA was taken in the immediate aftermath of the war, Kosovo domestic security situation was very tense. People identified as wearing the KLA uniform committed a series of violent and criminal acts. Human rights reports, which have gathered records of such violence, also admit the following: there is no evidence attributing those acts to an orchestrated strategy by the KLA leadership that for its part has always denied any involvement, and the main responsibility for lack of security in post-conflict Kosovo rests with KFOR. However, the same reports deem KLA's disclaimers insincere. The law enforcement authorities established by the KLA in the summer of 1999, if not engaged in collective revenge, were at best unwilling to protect minorities from reprisal, as well as being incapable of ensuring the safety of Albanians from political and extra-judicial justice.²⁴

In this context, the quick completion of KLA demobilization mattered. Thousands of weapons were disposed of and this helped improve the internal security situation.²⁵ That large caches of arms were subsequently discovered is less a test of demilitarization failure than a reflection of more serious phenomena, the strong sense of insecurity even under the protection of NATO, that were confirmed later by the lack of success of amnesty campaigns.²⁶

It also mattered that the IOM KPC program immediately engaged the KPC senior managers and focused them on how to structure a civil protection organization. Shortly

²³ There are disputes on the number, but see Anna Khakee and Nicolas Florquin, *Kosovo and the Gun: A Baseline Assessment of Small Arms and Light Weapons in Kosovo*, UNDP and Small Arms Survey, 2003, p. 13: the estimate of 20,000 KLA men is reasonable, given that KFOR estimate talks about 20,000 in 1999.

²⁴ Human Rights Watch, *Under Order. War Crimes in Kosovo*, 2001, especially ch. 17; OSCE *Kosovo/Kosova. As Seen, As Told, Part II. A Report on the Human Rights Findings of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo*, June to October 1999 (for a summary statement, p. xii); ICG, *What Happened to the KLA?* March 2000, pp. 16-18.

²⁵ On the positive effect of demobilization, even with *caveats*, see Eric Chevallier, *L'ONU au Kosovo: Leçons de la Première MINUK*, No. 35 Occasional Papers, Institute for Security Studies, Mai 2002: p. 31.

²⁶ The latest UNDP weapons amnesty campaign, which ended on October 1, 2003, resulted in only 155 guns being handed in to the authorities out of an estimate of almost half a million weapons currently in Kosovo.

afterwards, all members of the KPC were involved in training courses as well as reconstruction works. The quick development of a public information campaign ensured that Kosovo society would be informed about the civilian functions of the KPC and start identifying former combatants with their new roles.

Second Objective: offset short-term security threats

Whether the establishment of the KPC reduced the short-term threats to internal security or to cross borders guerrilla activity is another question and remains a matter of contention. Some studies report an astonishingly extensive connection between members of the KPC and ethnic Albanian fighters in Macedonia and Southern Serbia as clear evidence of demobilization's failure, although the figures mentioned are based on pure speculation. There is either no reference to any source, or reports are based on sources that are parties to the conflict, and therefore unreliable.²⁷ The reality is that there is no certain account of the number of KPC members who remained mobilized as guerrillas and fought in nearby countries, with the exception of those who have been clearly identified and duly dismissed from the organization.²⁸

A counter-factual question is how much more substantive would have been the engagement of former KLA fighters in other ethnic Albanian insurgencies without the existence of the KPC, given the highly volatile political context of post-conflict. Independent recommendations on regional security made at the time emphasize that the mere existence of a structured organization such as the KPC, with a daily working plan and a disciplinary code, would help to keep a large number of potential supporters under control.²⁹

The evidence supports this idea. During 2001, a closer KFOR involvement in training increased the capacity building as well the supervision of the KPC, curbing absenteeism and potential security lapses. Most importantly, the multi-layered IOM program, based on training, management advisory and deployment abroad, kept a large number of KPC occupied. A closer look at the growth of training activities, including the establishment of

²⁷ The report *A Review of Peace Operations* argues that "between 10 and 20% of the KPC [between 500 and 1000 men] – including its deputy commander – are believed to have fought in Macedonia in 2001," but no source is quoted, (paragraph 103). Quoting Yugoslavian armed forces, Heinemann-Gruder writes that about 60 members of the KPC had crossed the border and harassed civilians in Southern Serbia during the same year, p. 35. The same research bases its depiction of the criminal nature of the KLA only on Serbian internet web sites. Allegations made by a Macedonian-based web site, www.realtymacedonia.org.mk, pointing to a large Taliban presence in the KLA and KPC, are also wildly inaccurate. Yet, they are liberally repeated, without attribution or evidence, by European media (an example is Elisabetta Burba, "I guerriglieri del crimine," *Panorama*, 19/12/2002) and anti-NATO war ideologues such as Noam Chomsky, *Hegemony or Survival: America's Quest for Global Dominance*, Henry Holt, 2003.

²⁸ Most notable among them, Gëzim Ostremi has been dismissed by the KPC Commander, L.G. Agim Çeku. In 2001, Macedonia born Ostremi fought with the National Liberation Army, the insurgent guerrilla opposing the Macedonian government, while serving in the KPC Chief of Staff. He is now a member of the Macedonian Parliament. In connection with regional unrest during the same period, 22 KPC members were suspended, after a decision signed by President George W. Bush blacklisted them for posing a threat to US security.

²⁹ *After Milosevic*, p. 190.

the School of Civil Protection, but also at the number of humanitarian projects in which the KPC took the lead, gives a clear sense of the development of the KPC. It was a development that also enhanced the image of the organization among the public, and fulfilled the rank and file's aspiration to feel and look professional.

Thus, while the question above has no real answer, it does suggest the possibility that other factors, such as conflict's regional dynamics and NATO's security failure, allowed for unchecked movements to conflict areas by individuals other than KPC members.³⁰ It is well known that demobilization and reintegration programs in one place always fail when the war continues nearby. In fact, no further cross border activity has been registered after the 2001 Lake Ohrid agreement, which provided a political solution to the Albanian insurgency in Macedonia, and quickly improved the shaky security situation in the region. Similarly, the guerrilla fully demobilized in Southern Serbia when in the spring 2001 the Belgrade government implemented a plan to end discrimination against Albanians and NATO gradually let Serbian forces reoccupy the Demilitarized Zone.

Third Objective: Reintegration as Medium Term "Truce"

Kosovo has been asked by the UN to engage in defining what kind of society it is going to be by the year 2005. The KPC has subscribed to the Standards for Kosovo, which establish a sort of road map toward the goal of building a democratic society where the rule of law prevails, according to European standards. It has accepted the UN direction to develop as a multi-ethnic civil organization. However, it has never relinquished the idea of becoming the army of an independent Kosovo.

A critical question is thus whether the fact that the KPC holds longer-term goals at odds with its officially mandated mission can interfere with the success of the reintegration program. The answer is positive only if the objective of the program was clearly the longer-term reintegration into civilian life. As explained earlier, this objective has changed at least in part, and has become a medium-term "truce," in anticipation of Kosovo statehood. In this case, the relation between KPC members' aspiration to become an army and the success of the IOM reintegration program has become more complicated, and so the answer to the above question.

In the first place, the KPC corporate culture has not represented an obstacle to the IOM program. On the contrary, all indications are that in interesting ways it might have helped.

In interviews and informal conversation with KPC members, they all stress the fact that while working within the limit of the civil emergency mandate, they still see their future differently. The leadership in particular has never looked at the KPC merely as an avenue for employment in the civil sector. The central staff and mid-level leaders are fairly young groups, educated, with military experience, and early joiners of the KLA. Field

³⁰ *A Review of Peace*, "NATO forces on the ground were designed to protect the province from the Yugoslavian army but not to exert border control," paragraphs 63-66

members, although with less seniority in the KLA, were more often in the front line. Their shared memory of suffering and rebellion is psychologically very important. It gives special intensity to their relationships,³¹ and a great deal of pride, which allows them to withstand very difficult living conditions, especially the low salaries and the necessary dependence on family financial support in order to survive. Because they understand that their future depends on the future political status of Kosovo, the KPC are committed to achieve the required higher standards of discipline and professionalism, no matter how temporary the civil emergency tasks are in their mind.

Because of the uncertainty surrounding the future, the development of a professional civil organization such as the KPC has greatly contributed to offset the frustration not just of the KPC members, but also of the Kosovo population at large.

The KPC aspiration to become a defense force is in fact consistent with a broader political context. Insights gained from public opinion surveys and in-depth interviews among Kosovo Albanians reveal that the transformation of the KPC into an army is a foregone conclusion and a strongly held dream. In their minds this process is intuitively associated with more and better formal military training according to NATO standards. One could make much of the political wrangling among parties, whose rivalries date back to the emergence of the KLA and linger in the make up of the KPC, but there is a general agreement on this also in the local leadership.³²

The reason is that Kosovars, whose sense of security is very fragile no matter the ethnic affiliation, tend to rely on indigenous, rather than foreign structures of defense. The KPC is the “natural” embodiment of a local defense force for Kosovo Albanians, who in focus groups express deep trust in the organization and its Commander LG Agim Çeku.

This positive evaluation recognizes the KPC’s professionalism. High discipline and regular task accomplishment are mentioned as those features of the KPC that make the organization stand out, which is something to be proud of as a matter of “national identity.”³³ By becoming more professional, the KPC have not only projected a positive public image, they have maintained a strong sense of pride, even when engaged purely in civil activities.

The role played by the IOM program in this regard has been crucial in two ways. First, it has enhanced the KPC profile. It has also help project the image of an organization engaged in “working hard for the people,” a role fully acknowledged in focus groups, where the IOM is broadly recognized as leading in the field of humanitarian assistance.

³¹ ICRS, *Socio-Economic and Demographic Profiles of the KPC*, Vols. I-V, January 2000. In particular, two thirds of the key leaders were under 40 in 2000, half with the military before the war, half with a university degree and 78% with some university education; mid-level leaders are even younger and one third graduated from university.

³² The opinion of former KLA commanders turned politicians is well known. Significantly, Kosovo President Ibrahim Rugova has recently stated that “in the future, the KPC will be Kosovo defense force,” see Faik Hoti, “Në Fazën Tjetër TMK do të Jetë një Forcë Mbrojtëse e Kosovës, Thotë Rugova,” *Zëri*, 9 korrik, 2003

³³ *The KPC and Its Future*, p. 7

IOM has thus indirectly contributed to make the KPC a creative compromise between political aspirations and political realities in the medium term. The problem is how long this will last.

The end of the medium term?

As there are competing interpretations on the establishment of the KPC, there are competing views on what the KPC is now as well as on its future development. It is the contention of this report that the unsolved disagreement has come to represent a major obstacle to the success of reintegration.

There is an opinion among the international community that the former KLA and its offshoot, the KPC, have interlocking links with illegal organizations and activities.³⁴ In April 2003, a failed terrorist attack on a railway bridge in the northern part of Kosovo led to the death of the perpetrator, a KPC officer, and revived suspicions among the international community of an institutional KPC involvement in nationalist political violence.

We shouldn't underestimate the impact that these suspicions, turned into a collective condemnation of the KPC, have had on reintegration. They have certainly weakened international support, and donor funding, already lacking, has dried out. Also, by making the transformation of the KPC in a structure of "national defense" appear unacceptable,³⁵ they might seriously undermine KPC members' resolve to perform their tasks, slowing down the development of the organization.

The KPC Commander LG Agim Çeku strongly denies that the KPC is institutionally linked to extremism and crime. He is purportedly ready to investigate corrupt individuals, while insisting on avoiding the politicization of KPC reform.³⁶ Public opinion among Kosovo Albanians also believes that KPC members engaged in terrorist activities are individual "bad apples," and should be recognized as such. To neglect this fundamental distinction, they say, would be tantamount to criminalizing the KPC.³⁷

These views find support in the fact that there is no hard evidence of an institutional connection between the KPC and any guerrilla group or criminal organization. However, the KPC have not been capable to make a compelling argument in their defense, by demonstrating that they still lag behind the rule of law's standards. For example, the KPC leadership has judged accusations of war crimes leveled against former KLA fighters and KPC members – most notable among them Daut Haradinaj, Seli Veseli, Rustem Mustafa - as unfair indictments. In general, the KPC deem any comparison between crimes carried out by Serb forces in Kosovo and the war waged by the KLA, which they consider "a just

³⁴ Those making the argument have developed a habit of quoting a well researched but quite dated ICG Report, *What Happened to the KLA?* March 2000, but they do it selectively, and out of context.

³⁵ See Mini, p.

³⁶ Interview with Ceku

³⁷ Focus groups

war,” specious and wrong.³⁸ In order to guarantee real reintegration, strengthening human rights education might be the necessary path to take. The IOM program, with its focus on building technical and organizational expertise, has underestimated the importance of such instructions.

It appears that the ambiguity of the KPC could now become the major obstacle for a fully successful reintegration.³⁹ Ideas about shaking the status quo have been floating during the past year, both publicly and non, but no resolution seems possible before the definition of Kosovo political status. For the time being, the UN has rejected the Serb authorities’ request to disband the KPC. It has not been willing either to accept KFOR’s suggestion to change the name and the structure of the KPC, in the attempt to eliminate any reference to the military. In 2002, a USIP study suggested that the KPC split into a civil emergency organization and a part involved in discussing Kosovo Defense. This proposal has remained dormant since then. Agim Çeku’s proposal to increase the defense role of the KPC and start planning a defense council has also never acquired traction.

It is quite clear that changing the status quo of the KPC is hostage to the larger ambiguity: the issue of Kosovo’s final status, also not resolved. One nests within the other.

Lessons to be drawn form the IOM KPC Program

The case of the KPC might look easier than others because IOM did not have to face in Kosovo the many problems that mar many other demobilization and reintegration programs. There was no need for establishing quartering sites, no group with special needs, like women or child soldiers, no competing insurgents groups, no major problem in identifying who had been a combatant, no health hazard or epidemic, while solid family structures acted as substitute to the lack of infrastructure and economic development.⁴⁰

On the other hand, complicating factors such as the uncertain political status of Kosovo and the subsequent uncertainty surrounding the longer-term definition of the KPC cannot be overestimated.

With this in mind, there are specific lessons to be drawn from the IOM KPC program, which could be useful in other environments.

³⁸ Press releases and discussion on KLA war crimes at the Academy

³⁹ James Pettifer, *The KPC in Transformation*, UK Defense Academy, July 2003 and Janus Bugajnski...

⁴⁰ For a checklist, see World Bank, *Case Studies in War-to-Peace Transitions*, Discussion Paper No. 331, Washington DC, 1996 and World Bank, *Demobilization and Reintegration of Military Personnel in Africa: The Evidence from Seven Case Studies*, Report IDP-130, Washington DC, 1993. See the case of Haiti, where a well designed and implemented program did not manage to employ more than 6% of the people who underwent training, see Jonathan Dworken, Jonathan Moore and Adam Siegel, *Haiti Demobilization and Reintegration Program. Evaluation for USAID*, March 1997, Institute for Public Research, CAN Corporation

- **Flexibility, engagement and local ownership are crucial.** The achievements of the IOM KPC training program do confirm the importance of some general features of successful reintegration: namely, the flexibility of program's design and implementation, the focus on professionalism and engagement, and the creation of a sense of local ownership.
- **Ensure centralized coordination.** While a broad based coordination is very important for any reintegration program, the reality of post-conflict societies in transition is often characterized by weak local institutions and overlapping international authorities. The IOM KPC model has demonstrated that by centralizing training and capacity building in one organization, problems of coordination can be minimized.
- **Establish a direct link between training, capacity building and employment.** The environment of almost all demobilization and reintegration suffers from a poor economy, lack of infrastructure, and high rates of unemployment. Because there is always enough to do for a civil protection agency in such circumstances, the KPC could keep busy and engaged both in training and real interventions. By doing so, it has gained society's respect and trust.
- **Engage the leadership.** The engagement of the leadership in planning and structuring the KPC at first, and later supporting the program in all its aspects, is a necessary component of success. Because the KPC leadership believes in a strong partnership with the international community, it has remained committed to achieve the required higher standards of discipline and professionalism, no matter how temporary the civil emergency tasks are in their mind.

To conclude, the IOM KPC program is a showcase for a unique experiment: linking the reintegration of demobilized combatants to the creation of a civil emergency agency. This experiment could serve as a model for any post-conflict society where the needs for structural reconstruction and confidence building are great.