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Disinformation Alerts – Serbian Media Monitoring is a monthly report on the news related to disinformation and misinformation targeting Kosovo, published by media in Serbia

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KOSOVO DISINFORMATION ALERTS

**SERBIAN MEDIA
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INTRODUCTION

Kosovo Disinformation Alerts: Serbian Media Monitoring aims to counter disinformation through monitoring on a monthly basis of the preselected media outlets originating in Serbia. The preselected media are Tanjug, Informer, Novosti, Kurir, B92, Politika and Naša Borba that are known for producing news with disinformation content that is not limited only to Kosovo.

The monitoring of these media shows that during March 2020 a total of 443 news have been published by preselected media outlets originating in Serbia, of which Tanjug has published 74, Beta, 59, Informer 59, Novosti 74, Kurir 12, B92 67, Politika 62 and Naša Borba 22 articles related to Kosovo.

A careful review shows that the news published during this period by Beta, Novosti, Kurir and Nin did not contain any serious disinformation content. However, other preselected media outlets did have quite a large number of news and articles with disinformation content on Kosovo. Against this backdrop, KIPRED is focused on the deconstruction of the most blatant disinformation provided by the above listed Serbian media, which will be discussed in the following section.

The aim of the disinformation generated in this monitoring period by the preselected Serbian media in relation to Kosovo indicates that it is focused on undermining the statehood of Kosovo and its sovereignty by discrediting its leadership and security institutions, as well as by portraying Kosovo as a state that oppresses its minority ethnic communities. The preselected articles also try to undermine the support of the West to Kosovo and to discredit NATO by accusing it for its commitment of terrible crimes against Serbia.

DECONSTRUCTION OF THE MOST BLATANT DETECTED DISINFORMATION

Disinformation Alert 1

Headline: *Rade Drobacsreda Politika: Srbiju smo odbranili 1999, odbranićemo je i sada*
(*Rade Drobacsreda for Politika: We defended Serbia in 1999, and we will defend it now*),
Politika, 25 March 2020.¹

According to the article, Serbia has managed to defend itself against NATO despite 78 days of its air campaign in 1999. The article further claims that some 3,500 people have been killed and 12,500 were wounded, half of them civilians. However, despite enormous damages caused by the bombing, the article maintains that NATO did not manage to step even one foot in Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY). As an argument that Serbia has not lost the war, the article mentions the “Kumanovo Agreement” and UN Security Council Resolution 1244, which according to it have guaranteed the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the FRY. Finally, according to the article, although NATO has attacked FRY border from the direction of Albania, it has failed to break through the defense.

Deconstruction of the Disinformation: Facts and Figures

a) Serbia did lose the war against NATO in 1999

It has to be clarified that NATO intervention in 1999 against FRY was only a bombing campaign and it never included ground troops. Consequently, it is clear that “NATO did not manage to step even one foot” in FRY territory, because this was not the intention. NATO troops did however enter into Kosovo (which was officially a FRY territory) in June 1999 after the “Military Technical

¹ Rade Drobacsreda, “Srbiju smo odbranili 1999, odbranićemo je i sada (We defended Serbia in 1999, and we will defend it now)”, Politika, 25 March 2020, <http://www.politika.rs/sr/clanak/450482/Pogledi/Srbiju-smo-odbranili-1999-odbranicemo-je-i-sada>

Agreement”² was signed in Kumanovo. The Agreement clearly stipulated the withdrawal of Serbian military and police forces from Kosovo, which is an argument that Serbia has lost the war against NATO. On the other hand, border attacks from the direction of Albania were undertaken by the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), and not NATO, which, as already mentioned, had no troops on the ground during the bombing campaign. Also, it should be mentioned that on 10/11 of May 1999, KLA managed to break through the FRY defense at the battle of Koshare.

b) Exaggeration of the presented number of casualties

According to the detailed data gathered based on 31,600 documents, presented in the publication “Kosovo Memory Book” (February 2nd, 2015) which was prepared by the Humanitarian Law Center based in Belgrade, confirm that the NATO attacks killed a total of 754 people: 454 civilians and 300 members of the armed forces. 207 civilians were of Serbian and Montenegrin ethnicity, 219 were Albanian, 14 civilians were Roma, and 14 were of other nationalities. Clearly, the documented data show that the number of deaths during NATO Air Campaign was much lower than 3,500, as presented in the article. The data also show that less than half of the Serbian deaths were civilians (207 out of 300).

c) Military Technical Agreement and UN Security Council Resolution 1244 did not guarantee the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the FRY

The “Military Technical Agreement” does not mention at all the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the FRY.³ The UN Security Council Resolution 1244 of 10th of June 1999 did mention the territorial integrity and sovereignty of FRY, but the Resolution was contradictory and, in keys parts, unclear. On the one hand, it reaffirms the “sovereignty and territorial integrity” of the FRY, but on the other hand also demands that full account be taken of the Rambouillet accords, which in turn speak of determining a final settlement “on the basis of the will of the

² “Military Technical Agreement Between the International Security Force (“KFOR”) and the Governments of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Republic of Serbia,” Kumanovo, 9 June 1999.

³ “Military Technical Agreement Between the International Security Force (“KFOR”) and the Governments of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Republic of Serbia,” Kumanovo, 9 June 1999.

people.”⁴ It was precisely based on the will of the people that the Republic of Kosovo has become independent on 17th of February 2008.

Disinformation Alert 2

Headline: “Gujon: Srbima sa KiM pomoć potrebna više nego ikada (Gujon: Serbs from Kosovo and Metohija need help more than ever)”, **Tanjug, 21 March 2020**⁵.

The article states that according to the founder of the humanitarian organization "Solidarity for Kosovo", Arno Gujon, "more than 2,000 Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija are surviving only thanks to the soup kitchens, which are working despite the crisis and all the measures that are being implemented there. Gujon says that during the time when the COVID-19 virus has hit the entire world, Kosovo Serbs are in a particularly difficult position because they are threatened not only by the virus but also by the moves of the Pristina government.

Deconstruction of the Disinformation: Facts and Figures

a) Misusing humanitarian help for achieving political goals

The founder of the so-called humanitarian organisation "Solidarity for Kosovo", Arno Gujon - a French citizen who holds a Serbian citizenship as well – is well known to the Kosovo institutions and the wider public. He is considered a strong supporter of the far right ideological beliefs, as well as with anti-American, anti-nationalist and anti-Islamic stances that are also supported by Vladimir Putin throughout Europe. According to different sources he was also a candidate for the white supremacist group “Bloc Identitaire”.⁶ Disguised as a humanist, he has through Serb

⁴ Security Council of the United Nations, “Resolution 1244 (1999) on the situation relating Kosovo,” New York, 10 June 1999.

⁵⁵ Tanjug, “Gujon: Srbima sa KiM pomoć potrebna više nego ikada (Gujon: Serbs from Kosovo and Metohija need help more than ever),” 21 March 2020, <http://www.tanjug.rs/full-view.aspx?izb=543794>

⁶ See for instance

Orthodox Church for years distributed aid to the Serb population in Kosovo. In fact, Mr. Gouillon real mission was to lobby against the recognition of the state of Kosovo, and is actually misusing help to Serb population for achieving his political goals. He has in several occasions tried to come to Kosovo, and in 2018 was questioned by Kosovo police and was not allowed to enter Kosovo.⁷

Otherwise, it has to be mentioned that despite relatively weak health system, Kosovo has managed to quite successfully handle the Covid-19 pandemic, and according to John Hopkins University, it ranks 12th in Europe in terms of the number of coronavirus related deaths per 100,000 inhabitants.⁸

Disinformation Alert 3

Headline: “Đurić sa državnim funkcionerom Finske o Kosovu i Metohiji (Đurić with the state official of Finland on Kosovo and Metohija”, **Tanjug, 11 March 2020**⁹.

The article reports that the Director of the Office for Kosovo and Metohija, Marko Djuric, met with the Undersecretary for Foreign and Security Policy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland, Kai Sauer, and discussed about the position of the Serbian citizens in the southern province as well as about the prospects for continuing the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina. During the meeting, Djuric has also pointed out that recently, Albanian political representatives in Prishtina transmit more and more often chauvinistic messages to the public. This has according to Djuric, resulted in the continuous worsening of the position Serbs in Kosovo

Samuel Bouron, “Studying the social conditions that make possible the militant commitment to the extreme right: Ethnography of the training camp of the “Identitaires” – France,” Workpaper, The European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR) General Conference, Montreal: August 2015.

⁷ Periskopi, “Maskimi pas ndihmave për serbët i ‘humanistit’ francez që iu ndalua hyrja në Kosovë,” Prishtina, 12 September 2018, <https://www.periskopi.com/maskimi-pas-ndihmave-per-serbet-i-humanistit-francez-qe-iu-ndalua-hyrja-ne-kosove/>

⁸ See “COVID-19 Dashboard by the Center for Systems Science and Engineering (CSSE) at Johns Hopkins University (JHU),” 8 May 2020, <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html>

⁹ Tanjug, “Đurić sa državnim funkcionerom Finske o Kosovu i Metohiji (Đurić with the state official of Finland on Kosovo and Metohija,” 11 March 2020, <http://www.tanjug.rs/full-view.aspx?izb=541594>

and Metohija and in an increasing number of incidents aimed at intimidating the non-Albanian population. In addition, he also stated that Kosovo government has even in official documents, such as the recently adopted program of Kurti's government, manifested its unwillingness for a productive dialogue with Serbia. Djuric also warned that in self-proclaimed Kosovo, an anti-European concept of a mono-ethnic society has been established for years, in which “all non-Albanians are second-class citizens and are denied even the most basic human rights, such as the right to safe and dignified life, property rights and the right to return”.

Deconstruction of the Disinformation: Facts and Figures

a) Kosovo is a multi-ethnic society with high respect of human rights for all non-Albanian citizens

Clearly, the article intends to display Kosovo as a state that oppresses its minority communities and with high potential for eruption of ethnic violence. At the same time, it tries to undermine the statehood of Kosovo, and the support of the West to Kosovo. Article 3 of the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo clearly states that Kosovo “is a multi-ethnic society consisting of Albanian and other Communities, governed democratically with full respect for the rule of law through its legislative, executive and judicial institutions.¹⁰ Furthermore, Article 5 of the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo¹¹ designates Albanian and Serbian as the two official languages, with equal status before the institutions. The Law on the Use of Languages also makes reference to the constitution and states that the Albanian and Serbian versions are “equally authoritative,” meaning that neither takes precedence over the other when it comes to interpretation.¹² In addition, Article 22 states that along with other international human rights instruments, “Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities” is directly applicable

¹⁰ The Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo, Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo, Article 3, 15 June 2008, http://kryeministri-ks.net/wpcontent/uploads/2018/03/Kushtetuta.e.Republikes.se_.Kosoves-2.pdf

¹¹ The Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo, Article 5.

¹² Law No. 02/L-37 on the Use of Languages, Articles 2 and 5, as promulgated by UNMIK Regulation No.2006/51, 20 October 2006.

in Kosovo.¹³ Finally, Article 64 of the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo clearly states in the Assembly of Kosovo “twenty (20) of the one hundred twenty (120) seats are guaranteed for representation of communities that are not in the majority in Kosovo”.¹⁴

All these provisions in the Constitution clearly show that Kosovo is a multi-ethnic society with high respect of human rights for Serbs and other non-Albanian citizens.

b) Kosovo government is willing to have a productive dialogue with Serbia

The dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia has been blocked after the Kosovo government imposed a 100% tax on all goods imported from Serbia in November 2018. Since then, the Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic had said he would not resume the dialogue until Kosovo lifts the tariffs on goods from Serbia. On 31st of March, the Kosovo Prime-Minister Kurti has announced that starting on April 1st, Kosovo is lifting that 100% tax and that all goods imported from Serbia will need only documentation that "must comply with the constitution of the Republic of Kosovo and the applicable legislation." On April 3rd, members of the European Parliament have welcomed the decision of the Kosovo government to lift the tariffs on goods from Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and have called it “a crucial step, which will lead to the resumption of the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina”¹⁵. Similarly, the EU high representative Josep Borrell has hailed the decision of Kosovo’s outgoing government to completely remove 100% tariffs on imports from Serbia and Bosnia & Herzegovina starting from the 1st of April¹⁶. By removing the tariffs on all goods imported from Serbia, the Kosovo government has shown willingness for continuing the productive dialogue with Serbia.

¹³ The Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo, Articles 22.

¹⁴ The Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo, Articles 64.

¹⁵ European Parliament, “Kosovo: MEPs welcome lifting tariffs on goods from Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, Press Release, 03 April 2020, <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/delegations/en/dsee/product/20200403DPU25077>

¹⁶ IntelliNews, “EU hails Kosovo’s decision to lift Serbian tariffs, Serbia unimpressed,” 01 April 2020, <https://www.intellinews.com/eu-hails-kosovo-s-decision-to-lift-serbian-tariffs-serbia-unimpressed-179961/?source=serbia>

Disinformation Alert 4

Headline: “Đurić: Takse nisu ukinute; Priština nastavlja da se poigrava (Đurić: Taxes have not been abolished; Pristina continues to play)”, B92, 31 March 2020¹⁷

The article conveys a statement by Djuric according to whom the actions announced by Kurti were only a suspension of taxes and was conditional, and have in addition introduced “new punitive measures for our citizens and the economy, which he calls reciprocity.” Djuric further maintains that “this does not de-escalate the situation and does not return to the situation before the introduction” of the taxes”. Moreover, he points out that “Pristina continues to play with this issue and...this decision is a play intended for the international community.”

Deconstruction of the Disinformation: Facts and Figures.

a) The 100% tariff on all goods imported from Serbia has been lifted

The government of Kosovo has approved the decision to partially lift a politically divisive import tariff on goods from Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, at least on a temporary basis. Prime-Minister Kurti has announced on 31st of March that starting on April 1st, Kosovo is lifting that 100% tax and that all goods imported from Serbia will need only documentation that “must comply with the constitution of the Republic of Kosovo and the applicable legislation.” On April 3rd, members of the European Parliament have welcomed the decision of the Kosovo government to lift the tariffs on goods from Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and have called it “a crucial step, which will lead to the resumption of the dialogue between Belgrade and

¹⁷ B92, “Đurić: Takse nisu ukinute; Priština nastavlja da se poigrava (Đurić: Taxes have not been abolished; Pristina continues to play)”, 31 March 2020, https://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2020&mm=03&dd=31&nav_category=640&nav_id=1671497

Pristina”¹⁸. Similarly, the EU high representative Josep Borrell has hailed the decision of Kosovo’s outgoing government to completely remove 100% tariffs on imports from Serbia and Bosnia & Herzegovina starting from the 1st of April¹⁹.

Disinformation Alert 5

Headline: “Vučić o NATO agresiji: Tukli su Srbiju da bi joj oteli Kosovo (Vučić about NATO aggression: They beat Serbia in order to rob it of Kosovo)”, **Politika, 24 March 2020**²⁰

The article transmits the address to the nation of the President of Serbia, Aleksandar Vučić, on the occasion of the 21st anniversary of the beginning of the NATO aggression. Vucic points out that the citizens of Serbia will never forget the terrible crime NATO committed against Serbia, as well as the thousands of people who were killed during that aggression. He also claims that the aim of NATO aggression was to rob Serbia of Kosovo

Deconstruction of the Disinformation: Facts and Figures

a) NATO did not commit a terrible crime during the air campaign in 1999

As it can be seen from the title of the article, Vucic claims that NATO has committed a terrible crime against Serbia during the air campaign in 1999. However, it was Serbian military, police and paramilitary forces that committed atrocities against the people of Kosovo in flagrant violation of international law. The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) has on

¹⁸ European Parliament, “Kosovo: MEPs welcome lifting tariffs on goods from Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, Press Release, 03 April 2020, <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/delegations/en/dsee/product/20200403DPU25077>

¹⁹ IntelliNews, “EU hails Kosovo’s decision to lift Serbian tariffs, Serbia unimpressed,” 01 April 2020, <https://www.intellinews.com/eu-hails-kosovo-s-decision-to-lift-serbian-tariffs-serbia-unimpressed-179961/?source=serbia>

²⁰ Politika, “Vučić o NATO agresiji: Tukli su Srbiju da bi joj oteli Kosovo (Vučić about NATO aggression: They beat Serbia in order to rob it of Kosovo)”, 24 March 2020, <http://www.politika.rs/sr/clanak/450735/Vucic-o-NATO-agresiji-Tukli-su-Srbiju-da-bi-joj-oteli-Kosovo>

27 May 1999, while the NATO air strikes were still ongoing, charged Milosevic and four of his senior aides with crimes against humanity. Even before this indictment, the United States had clear evidence that implicated nine Yugoslav military officers in crimes against humanity.²¹ As already mentioned, the Human Rights Watch report has documented “torture, killings, rapes, forced expulsions, and other war crimes committed by Serbian and Yugoslav government forces against Kosovar Albanians between March 24 and June 12, 1999.”

On the other hand, the Final Report to the Prosecutor of the ICTY by the “Committee Established to Review the NATO Bombing Campaign Against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia” stated that “there is simply no evidence of the necessary crime base for charges of genocide or crimes against humanity.” Furthermore, in the particular incidents reviewed by the committee with particular care “the committee has not assessed any particular incidents as justifying the commencement of an investigation by the Office of the Prosecutor.”²²

b) Exaggeration of the presented number of deaths

According to the Human Rights Watch Report “Civilian Deaths in the NATO Air Campaign” on the basis of available evidence has concluded that as few as 488 and as many as 527 Yugoslav civilians were killed as a result of NATO bombing. It has further clarified that between 278 and 317 of the dead, were in Kosovo, 201 civilians were killed in Serbia, and eight in Montenegro.²³

On the other hand, the detailed data gathered based on 31,600 documents, presented in the publication “Kosovo Memory Book” (February 2nd, 2015) which was prepared by the Humanitarian Law Center based in Belgrade, confirm that the NATO attacks killed a total of 754 people: 454 civilians and 300 members of the armed forces. 207 civilians were of Serbian and Montenegrin ethnicity, 219 were Albanian, 14 civilians were Roma, and 14 were of other

²¹ “Press Conference Given by NATO Spokesman, Jamie Shea and SHAPE Spokesman, Major General Walter Jertz,” May 23, 1999.

²² International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, “Final Report to the Prosecutor by the Committee Established to Review the NATO Bombing Campaign Against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia,” 13 June 2000, <https://www.icty.org/x/file/Press/nato061300.pdf>

²³ “Civilian Deaths in the NATO Air Campaign,” Human Rights Watch Report, Volume 12, Number 1 (D), 2000, <https://www.hrw.org/reports/2000/nato/>

nationalities. Clearly, the documented data show that the number of deaths during NATO Air Campaign was much lower than “several thousands” as presented in the article.

Disinformation Alert 6

Headline: “E SAD JE SVE SPREMNO ZA SAHRANU LAŽNE DRŽAVE! Šiptari potpuno poludeli: Haradinaj poslao Kurtiju MRTVAČKI KOVČEG sa porukama koje znače RAT! (NOW EVERYTHING IS READY FOR THE BURIAL OF A FALSE STATE! Shiptars have gone completely insane: Haradinaj sent Kurti the FUNERAL COFFIN with messages that mean WAR!)”,
Informer, 02 March 2020²⁴

The article has a bombastic title, in which in addition of using the derogatory term “Šiptari” for Albanians, it also states that “everything is ready for the burial of a false state” and that “Haradinaj sent Kurti the funeral coffin with messages that mean war”. The body text of the article makes no reference whatsoever to its title and it only informs that the opposition party “Alliance for the Future of Kosovo” (AAK) of Ramush Haradinaj, who is the fiercest opponent of the abolition of taxes on Serbian and BiH products, sent today a fake coffin to the Prime Minister Albin Kurti, as a warning against the removal of the measure.

Deconstruction of the Disinformation: Facts and Figures

The main focus of the article is on undermining the statehood of Kosovo by projecting Kosovo as rogue state, and by discrediting its leadership and security institutions. By presenting Kosovo as a threat to the regional security, the article also aims at weakening the support and assistance of

²⁴ Informer, “E SAD JE SVE SPREMNO ZA SAHRANU LAŽNE DRŽAVE! Šiptari potpuno poludeli: Haradinaj poslao Kurtiju MRTVAČKI KOVČEG sa porukama koje znače RAT! (NOW EVERYTHING IS READY FOR THE BURIAL OF A FALSE STATE! Shiptars have gone completely insane: Haradinaj sent Kurti the FUNERAL COFFIN with messages that mean WAR!)”, 02 March 2020, <https://informer.rs/vesti/politika/497178/sad-sve-spremno-sahranu-lazne-drzave-siptari-potpuno-poludeli-haradinaj-poslao-kurtiju-mrtvacki-kovceg-porukama-koje-znace-rat-foto>

Western countries for Kosovo's democratic state building. The article misleads the reader by using a bombastic title and then does not make any reference whatsoever to it. Furthermore, it uses the derogatory and insulting language by calling Albanians "Šiptari", and by stating that "Shiptars have gone completely insane". The article falsely claims that "Haradinaj sent Kurti the funeral coffin with messages that mean war", but AAK had clearly stated that the message sent with the coffin meant that all of Kurti's promises have died today. Although, the tariffs on goods from Serbia that article refers to, were lifted by Kurti on April 1st, no one has seen any signs of war in Kosovo.

Disinformation Alert 7

Headline: "ŠOKANTNO OKTRIĆE: Evo ko je pomogao ubici Olivera Ivanovića (SHOCKING DISCOVERY: Here is who helped the murderer of Oliver Ivanović)", **Nasa Borba, 02 March 2020**²⁵

According to the article, the American CIA has sabotaged the investigation of the terrorist attack on the "Nis Express" bus in 2001 by releasing from his military base Bondsteel the accused for that act Florim Ejupi, a member of the KLA. Furthermore, the article claims that there is solid evidence that Ejupi who has been for a long time trained by the CIA, has in January 2018 assassinated the SDP leader Oliver Ivanović in front of the party's office in Kosovska Mitrovica. The article then turns to Florim Ejupi's bomb attack on a civilian bus in a Serb-populated area near the town of Podujevo, in February 2001 that killed 12 Serb civilians and injured 40 who were travelling to the Gračanica monastery. It claims that after being arrested by UNMIK police, Ejupi has been safely evacuated from military prison at the U.S. Camp Bondsteel. The article allegedly bases such information on an e-mail that Former UNMIK investigator in Kosovo and Metohija Joe

²⁵ Nasa Borba, "ŠOKANTNO OKTRIĆE: Evo ko je pomogao ubici Olivera Ivanovića (SHOCKING DISCOVERY: Here is who helped the murderer of Oliver Ivanović)", 02 March 2020, <https://nasaborba.com/sokantno-oktrice-evo-ko-je-pomogao-ubici-olivera-ivanovica/>

McAllister sent in 2013 to former KFOR officer Kristian Kahrs. In that e-mail, according to the article, McAllister states that there were a lot of theories about how Ejupi escaped, and that the case was linked to CIA and that Ejupi was an informant. The article hardly addresses the “shocking discovery” about who helped the murderer of Oliver Ivanović. There is no single reference based on a statement by President Vucic about Ejupi’s arrival from Germany to Rinas Airport in Tirana, his short entry in Kosovo, and his return to Germany via Albania. Most of the article is in fact about Ejupi’s bomb attack on a civilian bus and other information about him. Among others, the article claims that in 2004 Ejupi was again arrested in Tirana and was sentenced to 40 years in prison in 2008. However, in 2009 he was released by the “Supreme Court of the false state of Kosovo” due to “insufficient evidence”.

Deconstruction of the Disinformation: Facts and Figures

The article misleads the reader by using a bombastic title of the “shocking discovery” about who helped the murderer of the SDP leader Oliver Ivanović, and then hardly refers to that in the rest of the text. The relatively long article actually mostly refers to Florim Ejupi and his bomb attack on a civilian bus in a Serb-populated area near the town of Podujevo in February 2001. In fact, it attracts the reader’s attention with a title about an ambiguous and unsolved political assassination, and then misuses the tragic civilian bus bombing to discredit Kosovo institutions and US military.

a) No evidence that Florim Ejupi has murdered Oliver Ivanović

Florim Ejupi was firstly accused for Ivanovic murder in July 2019 by President Vucic, and his statement accusing Ejupi was followed by additional accusations from the head of the Serbian government’s office for Kosovo, Marko Djuric. However, no proof linking either Ejupi or Zekaj to the Ivanovic killing has since been made public by Belgrade. After these accusations, the

Prosecutor of the Kosovo Special Prosecution, Syle Hoxha, has in July 2019 stated that the name of Florim Ejupi does not appear as a possible suspect involved in the murder of Ivanovic in the investigations carried out by the Kosovo institutions. Later, in December 2019, after almost two years of investigation, Kosovo's Special Prosecution charged six people with participating in or organising a criminal group, misuse of office, assisting in a murder, possession of illegal weapons, disclosure of official secrets and misuse of evidence in relation to the Ivanovic case.²⁶ The Kosovo authorities have also named Milan Radoicic, vice-president of the main Belgrade-backed Kosovo Serb political party, Srpska Lista, as one of the suspects. Radoicic, is a local businessman, who is widely described as the real power-holder in Serb-majority northern Kosovo. After avoiding arrest in November 2018, he moved to Serbia, where the authorities have asserted that he is innocent.²⁷ After the failed raid on Radoicic's home, Kosovo's President Hashim Thaci labelled him the prime suspect in the Ivanovic's murder and said that it was Belgrade's responsibility to take action to detain him. In February 2020, a trial against the six Serbs accused with the participation in the assassination of Ivanovic has started. All of them pleaded not guilty of all charges at the preparatory hearing before Pristina's Special Court.

It is important to mention that Albanians in Kosovo had no motivation what so ever to murder Oliver Ivanovic. While Ivanovic was once considered a hard-core nationalist, he has with time evolved into a political moderate who advocated coexistence between Kosovo's Serb minority and Albanian majority. In recent years, prior to assassination, Oliver Ivanovic was openly speaking up against organised crime in the North of Kosovo and for reconciliation within Kosovo independence. He has also publicly criticized the Government of Serbia and ruling Serbian Progressive Party (SPP) for favoring Serb List over other Serbian parties in Kosovan local elections. In turn, Ivanovic was fiercely criticised by the SPP during Kosovo's regional elections by labeling him as a "traitor" and anti-Serbian politician.²⁸ It is not surprising then why in his reaction to

²⁶ Serbeze Haxhiaj, Maja Zivanovic and Ivana Jeremic, "Kosovo, Serbia Play Blame Game over Ivanovic Assassination", Balkan Investigative Reporting Network, 15 January 2020,

<https://balkaninsight.com/2020/01/15/kosovo-serbia-play-blame-game-over-ivanovic-assassination/>

²⁷ Perparim Isufi, "Kosovo Indicts Six for Serb Politician Ivanovic's Murder," Balkan Insight, 02 December 2019,

<https://balkaninsight.com/2019/12/02/kosovo-indicts-six-for-serb-politician-ivanovics-murder/>

²⁸ Al Jazeera, "Kosovo: The mysterious murder of Oliver Ivanovic," 01 June 2018,

<https://www.aljazeera.com/blogs/europe/2018/05/kosovo-mysterious-murder-oliver-ivanovic-180529144925924.html>

President VUCIQ, the brother of Oliver Ivanovic considers the mention of Florim Ejupi's name as a suspect in the case as Vucic's political action. Finally, Florim Ejupi has for false allegations reported President Vucic to the German police and “was allegedly told that he should not be upset about the case because the police were handling the Serbian authorities.”²⁹

b) Florim Ejupi was released by EULEX judges

Initially, Florim Ejupi was in 2008 trialed by a Regulation 64 panel in the District Court of Pristina, with three international judges and two domestic judges, the lead judge being Hajnalka Karpati of Hungary. The trial held 10 hearings to evaluate the evidence against Ejupi, including the testimony of six witnesses, four of which were victims, along with 17 witness statements. The defendant himself chose to remain silent and did not present a case. (Humanitarian Law Center Report, 24 June 2011) In the end Ejupi was convicted of 11 counts of murder as well as other charges and was sentenced to 40 years imprisonment.³⁰

In March 2009, Ejupi was released from prison by the order of the Supreme Court of Kosovo. The court had determined that there was insufficient evidence to convict Ejupi and ordered his release. In its opinion, the court, led by three European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) judges and three Kosovar judges, concluded that the material facts were insufficient to support the reasoning from the Trial Chamber since the aforementioned material evidence failed to provide any link to the crimes. The court stated that “the first instance judgement determined properly the material facts but that having regard to the determination of the factual situation, in cause the absence of convincing evidence against the accused, a judgement of acquittal (not guilty) should have been passed according to the application of the law.”³¹ In addition, the court has argued that, given that the alleged crime had occurred 9 years previously, “sending back the

²⁹ N1, “Kosovo Albanian reports Vucic to German police,” 04 July 2019, <http://rs.n1info.com/English/NEWS/a497292/Kosovo-Albanian-reports-Vucic-to-German-police.html>

³⁰ Humanitarian Law Center, “Trials for war crimes and ethnically and politically motivated crimes in post-Yugoslav countries. Srbija”, 24 June 2011.

³¹ Supreme Court of Kosovo, para. 5.1, 12 March 2009.

case to the First Instance Court would not have any legal or real objective and contrary to the administration of justice.”³² Consequently, the Court closed the case against Florim Ejupi. Clearly, Ejupi was released due to insufficient evidence by the EULEX judges and not by the “Supreme Court of the false state of Kosovo” as the article states.

c) No evidence that Florim Ejupi was trained by CIA and was their informant

The article’s claim that Florim Ejupi was trained by CIA and was their informant is based on an e-mail that Former UNMIK investigator in Kosovo and Metohija Joe McAllister sent in 2013 to former KFOR officer Kristian Kahrs. However, even McAllister himself admits that he has “never got confirmation from anyone on that but the Brits on the Intel team, as well as the Germans, were all very suspicious of the American side after that”. So neither McAllister, nor the article itself provide any reliable evidence to support their claim that Florim Ejupi was trained by CIA and was their informant. It is symptomatic that the e-mail sent by McAllister in May 2013 is being misused after 7 years for daily politics gains

Disinformation Alert 8

Headline: “BIVŠI OFICIR KFORA PRIZNAO: CIA je u Bondstilu obučavala albanske teroriste, pozovite Mekalistera, svedočiće o tome! ON SE TEŠKO KAJE ZBOG NEPRAVDE PREMA SRBIMA! (FORMER KFOR OFFICER ACKNOWLEDGES: CIA trained Albanian terrorists in Bondsteel, call McAllister, he will testify about that! HE DEEPLY REGRETS FOR THE INJUSTICE TO THE SERBS!)”, Informer, 03 March 2020³³

³² Supreme Court of Kosovo, para. 6.1, 12 March 2009.

³³ Informer, “BIVŠI OFICIR KFORA PRIZNAO: CIA je u Bondstilu obučavala albanske teroriste, pozovite Mekalistera, svedočiće o tome! ON SE TEŠKO KAJE ZBOG NEPRAVDE PREMA SRBIMA! (FORMER KFOR OFFICER ACKNOWLEDGES: CIA trained Albanian terrorists in Bondsteel, call McAllister, he will testify about that! HE DEEPLY REGRETS FOR THE INJUSTICE TO THE SERBS!)”, 03 March 2020, <https://informer.rs/vesti/politika/497336/bivsi-oficir-kfora-priznao-cia->

The article refers to a statement of a former KFOR officer Kristian Kahrs, according to whom it was clear that the terrorists were trained by Americans, since they were trained completely in accordance to an American school. In addition, according to Kahrs, NATO had a five-kilometer security zone and a 25-kilometer air zone around Bondsteel, to which the Ministry of the Interior (MUP) and the Serbian army did not have access. Then the article turns, to Florim Ejupi who was accused for the bomb attack on a Serb civilian bus in February 2001. Kahrs claims that the former UNMIK investigator in Kosovo and Metohija Joe McAllister is willing to testify against the Ejupi's escape from the military base Bondsteel, and for whom McAllister is convinced that was trained by CIA and was their informant. Finally, according to the article, Kahrs believes that NATO is not an organisation for peace but one for dirty games, and that the exclusive reason for bombing Serbia was due to huge amounts of money that have flowed into the arms industry.

Deconstruction of the Disinformation: Facts and Figures

Another article with a bombastic title about CIA having trained Albanian terrorists in Bondsteel that afterwards hardly refers to that in the rest of the text. Obviously, the main aim of the article is to undermine the statehood of Kosovo, to project the KLA as a terrorist organisation and to discredit USA and NATO. The article makes heavy false accusations that Americans have been training terrorists in the military base Bondsteel, but fails to provide any supporting tangible evidence. The entire article is based on alleged claims by former KFOR officer Kristian Kahrs. However, even in the article, Kahrs is cited to have said that he asked Torstein Shaker, the Norwegian head of KFOR, about what was going on in Bondsteel, and that he has told him that he didn't remember. Then he cites an anonymous British academy officer according to whom "it was clear that the terrorists were trained by Americans, who were trained completely by an American school completely." The article to explain who were the "terrorists" that were trained

[bondstilu-obucavala-albanske-teroriste-pozovite-mekalistera-svedocice-tome-tesko-kaje-zbog-nepravde-prema-srbima](#)

by an American school, especially since the military base Bondsteel was opened only months after the “Military Technical Agreement” was signed in Kumanovo.

On the other hand, Kahrs claims that “NATO had a five-kilometer security zone and a 25-kilometer air zone around Bondsteel, to which the Ministry of the Interior (MUP) and the Serbian army did not have access. Clearly this represents an intentional manipulation, since by the time Bondsteel was opened, the Ministry of the Interior (MUP) and the Serbian army personnel were no longer present in Kosovo. Finally, the reference to Ejupi’s escape from Bondsteel was mentioned totally out of context, and it was already explained in detail in the “Disinformation Alert 7”.