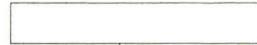
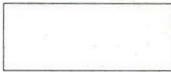
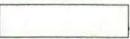
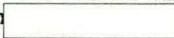
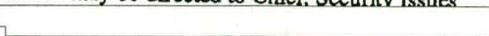


~~Secret~~*Directorate
of Intelligence***Intelligence Memorandum**
Office of European Analysis
5 January 1993**Albanian Armed Forces:
Unprepared for Confrontation
with Serbia** *Summary*

The Albanian military would be no match for the relatively modern, well-armed Serbian force in the event an ethnic conflict in Kosovo spilled into Albania. The Albanian armed forces have only obsolete, hand-me-down Soviet and Chinese weapons and lack sufficient supplies, training, and transportation to engage in intensive combat operations. A lack of funds has prevented Tirane from modernizing its forces, but the Defense Ministry is expanding liaison contacts to get help from other armies in reequipping and training the Albanian military. Defense officials also want to reduce the officer corps, eliminate former Communists, and restructure the army into a more flexible, mobile force. 

We believe the Albanian government would try to avoid direct military involvement if violence breaks out in Kosovo, but skirmishes between Albanian and Serb troops probably would be unavoidable. Tirane almost certainly would help the ethnic Albanians in Kosovo with some small arms and supplies and probably would serve as a pipeline for volunteers, arms, money, and supplies from other countries. Albanian support for the Kosovars, however, could lead to

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Serb military retaliation against bases inside Albania and pull Tirane into the war. Although Albania would appeal to the international community for support, it probably would look primarily to Turkey for security assistance. Ankara already is training some Albanian officers and has promised further support if Serbia invaded Albania, according to the US defense attache.

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[redacted]

Albanian Armed Forces: Unprepared for Confrontation

Tirane is increasingly concerned that a conflict in Kosovo would spill over into Albania. The military ordered a partial mobilization of forces in the north in May and June and deployed some infantry and artillery to positions closer to the border, [redacted]. In mid-October the Army raised the alert status of two of the divisions on the Kosovo border, and the deputy defense minister met with the district defense councils to discuss readiness levels, according to defense attache reporting. [redacted]

An Antiquated Force

The Albanian armed forces have about 65,000 troops, and Ministry of Defense plans call for mobilizing more than 400,000 in a crisis. Defense officials claim each of the 21 ground force divisions can expand to roughly 20,000 troops. Military officers say they can mobilize up to 70 percent of their ground forces within 24 hours. The armed forces, in our view, lack the weapons, supplies, and training, however, to field such a large force, even with considerably more time. In addition to these serious deficiencies, command and control problems render the army incapable of mounting anything but a border defense against limited incursions.

- **Ground Forces.** The 21 undermanned, cadre-strength divisions have about 58,000 troops in peacetime. Three divisions--currently totalling only 6,600 troops--are based near the border with Kosovo.
- **Air Force and Air Defense Forces.** The 4,000 man air and air defense force has about 90 or fewer 1950 and 1960 vintage combat aircraft. Albania has no modern surface-to-air missiles.
- **Navy.** The 3,000 man navy is little more than a coastal security force designed to counter piracy and intercept smugglers. The navy is equipped with an assortment of patrol boats armed with machine guns and torpedoes, some minelayers and minesweepers, as well as several obsolete submarines received from the Soviets in 1961. [redacted]

Budgetary constraints--including plans to slash defense spending from more than 11 percent to less than 8 percent of the national budget in 1993--will undermine the military's already limited combat capabilities and permit the Defense Ministry to pay personnel costs and little else.

- Albania's ground force weapons, communications equipment, aircraft, and ships are of Soviet and Chinese origin and woefully outdated. Indeed, the Albanian Chief of the General Staff recently complained that the military had not bought any new equipment from outside the country in 17 years, according to attache reporting. Most tanks are Chinese versions of the 1950 vintage Soviet T-54, and almost 90 percent of the fighter inventory is made up of MiG-17's or MiG-19's. Tirane's Whiskey class diesel submarines are restricted to a diving depth of 10 meters, according to the defense attache.

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- Maintenance of armored vehicles and aircraft is poor. According to attache reporting, the military has not had funds to purchase spare parts in years.
- Training is either non-existent or rudimentary. The air force has curtailed annual flying time to only 15 hours per pilot, 165 hours a year less than that recommended for NATO pilots. Combat units rarely use their weapons in live fire exercises, and some tank crews reportedly fire only one round a year. Large scale exercises are almost never conducted, and reserve training has been shortened to only seven days every two years.

The armed forces lack even the most basic supplies of fuel, food, medicine, and clothing. Some garrisons must grow vegetables and raise livestock to feed their soldiers adequately. Earlier this year the Minister of Defense said Albania would welcome Western uniforms, shoes, and hospital supplies.

Command and control is unwieldy and depends on outdated Chinese and Soviet communications equipment. Ground force divisions only loosely control their units, which are mostly garrisoned in the central or southern part of the country to meet the traditional threat from Greece and not in the north near Kosovo. The chain of command is further complicated by having all ground force division headquarters report directly to the Ministry of Defense, according to the US defense attache.

Tirane has no hope of modernizing its military forces without help from other countries, and senior military officials are expanding their contacts with other countries to obtain military assistance. Albania already plans to send officers to study in Germany, Italy, Turkey, Austria, Greece, and the United States. Tirane reportedly also is turning to former Warsaw Pact countries--Poland, Hungary, and Bulgaria--to seek additional equipment, according to attache reporting. Results have been modest, but the army has received 100 former East German military transport trucks from Germany and probably has received loans, food, and clothing from Turkey.

Force Capabilities

The military can mobilize enough troops and equipment to deal with minor ground skirmishes but would be no match for a determined Serb incursion using modern weapons. Transportation shortages and the poor road and rail network would prevent the General Staff from moving reinforcements quickly to the Kosovo border. Still, the Albanians could hold up a limited Serb attack along the border, where the terrain favors the defender. By calling up some 50,000 reservists who live near the border, the Army would be able to resort to small unit tactics and guerrilla warfare to counter the Serbs. Although the government almost certainly will be under heavy domestic pressure to help ethnic Albanians in Kosovo, we do not believe Tirane will view the use of military force as an acceptable or practical option for protecting Albanians there.

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- Albanian air and air defense forces are no match for its neighbors, especially the Serb air force. Without a real air force, Albanian ground and air forces would be virtually helpless against Serbia's over 260 relatively modern combat aircraft and sizable armored forces it would face.
- Albanian naval units probably are capable of limited mine laying operations and conducting minor forays against the nearby Serb port of Bar in Montenegro, but these attacks would be costly and of little military value and almost certainly would invite Serb retaliation.

Serb Force Capabilities in Kosovo

Belgrade has improved the capabilities of its forces in Kosovo since July and would be able to respond to an ethnic Albanian uprising in a few hours. By mid-October, elements of all four Yugoslav Army brigades in Kosovo had deployed out of garrison, trained conscripts, and called-up reservists, press reports.

In addition to some 25,000 Serb Interior Ministry troops, the Yugoslav Army has at least 10,000 men equipped with roughly 200 tanks, 160 armored combat vehicles, and 160 artillery pieces deployed in Kosovo. They could call up an additional 10,000 troops during a crisis. Belgrade also has at least 26,000 more troops within 50 kilometers of the Kosovo border. These units are equipped with 120 tanks, 100 armored combat vehicles, 260 artillery pieces, and 260 combat aircraft. Finally, there are roughly 75,000 ethnic Serb males between the ages of 15 and 59 in Kosovo and thousands of organized Serb paramilitary troops from Bosnia and Serbia who could join in the conflict.

Although Serbs dominate militarily, conflict in Kosovo would be prolonged. Some 250,000 ethnic Albanian males of military age claim they have weapons hidden away and undoubtedly would try to conduct a guerrilla war in the mountains and possibly a terrorist campaign against Serb targets in Kosovo and abroad.

Outlook

While Tirane would try to avoid direct military involvement if fighting broke out in Kosovo, its efforts to support the ethnic Albanians there probably would draw Albania into the fray. Albania almost certainly would provide indirect military support, including arms, training, and possibly military advisors, to the Kosovars and probably would serve as a pipeline for such aid from other countries, particularly Muslim states. Although Albanian officials publicly deny it now, they also probably would permit Kosovar guerrillas to use Albanian territory as a sanctuary--unofficially at least.

Belgrade has no territorial designs on Albania, but it probably would use military force to halt significant Albanian aid to Kosovo. Serbia's army probably would pursue fleeing guerrillas into Albania and even occupy mountain passes on the

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[redacted]

Albanian side of the border, where Belgrade's forces almost certainly would confront the Albanian army. Serbia's superior firepower would quickly overwhelm the Albanian army there, and Belgrade probably would conduct air strikes against suspected guerrilla bases in Albania or even against Albanian cities in retaliation for any Albanian assistance to the Kosovars. The conflict would be protracted if the Albanians took advantage of the rugged terrain in the border region and conducted guerrilla campaigns in Kosovo. [redacted]

With little prospect of winning a military conflict with Serbia, Albanian leaders probably would turn to other countries for help, including Muslim states. Although Iran reportedly has offered to send "volunteers" to help Albania repel an attack, [redacted] Tirane would look to Turkey as its primary security partner. Ankara probably would provide arms, logistic support, as well as advisors and additional military training. A recently concluded military cooperation agreement between Ankara and Tirane provides for joint military maneuvers, which could allow Turkey the pretext for deploying some forces to Albania in the event of violence in Kosovo. Although Turkey would be unlikely to commit a large number of ground troops in a conflict between Albania and Serbia, Ankara probably would provide some air defense forces--primarily SAMs--if Albania were attacked. Turkish intervention would, however, almost certainly fuel Greek suspicions of Ankara's growing influence in the region, according to US diplomats, and lead to increased tensions between the two countries. [redacted]

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Appendix

Struggling Military Reform

Recognizing its military vulnerabilities, Tirane is trying to emerge from its former isolation and is eagerly seeking military-to-military contacts with other countries, especially the United States and Turkey, to help with the reorganization and modernization of its armed forces.

The country's economic priorities currently outweigh military needs, however. Defense Minister Safet Zhulali has announced plans to reduce the size of the military, especially the 15,000 man officer corps, to cut costs and eliminate Communist influence. In May and June, the Defense Minister replaced key General Staff directors and up to 80 percent of the division commanders who were associated with the Communist Party, according to attache reporting. Many of the replacements are majors and captains with little command experience. Under the Minister's plan, up to 9,000 more officers will be dismissed by mid-1993. Lack of money probably will force defense officials to continue to rely on a conscript-based force whose term of service has been reduced from 24 to 15 months.

The Defense Ministry plans to reorganize its ground forces into a more flexible structure and consolidate the more than 1,500 garrisons and other separate facilities into fewer, more manageable bases to streamline command and control. The 21 ground force divisions probably will be reduced to 9 divisions, each with a wartime strength of between 15,000 and 18,000 and manned in peacetime at about 1,500 to 2,700 troops, according to various reports.

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Army	58,000
Air and Air Defense	4,000
Navy	3,000
Total	65,000

EQUIPMENT**Tanks**

85 mm Type 62*	30
100 mm Type 59*	731
T-34	116
Tanks, Unidentified	22
Total	889

Artillery/Mortars, 100 mm or Greater	1,624
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Combat Aircraft

MiG-17*	11
MiG-19*	66
MiG-21*	10
Total	87

Combat Ships

Submarines	4
Patrol Boats	59
Minelayers	2
Minesweepers	6
Total	71

* Chinese Models

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Albanian Military Forces, September 1992



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