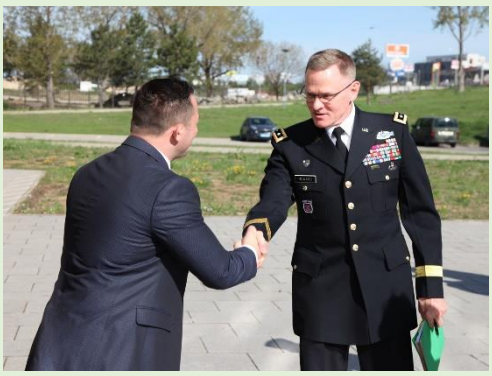
REPUBLIC OF KOSOVA
MINISTRY OF DEFENSE

NEWSLETTER

April 2022

MINISTRY OF DEFENSE AND KSF CONTINUE TO HAVE STRONG SUPPORT FROM THE USA

The Deputy Commander of the United States European Command (EUCOM), Lieutenant General Michael L. Howard and his delegation were hosted at the Ministry of Defense in April. On this occasion, the Minister of Defense, Armend Mehaj and the Commander of the KSF, Lieutenant General Bashkim Jashari, in separate meetings informed General Howard with the achievements made so far and the development processes of the Ministry of Defense and the KSF, as well as the objectives for the future. Both stressed the great importance of the irreplaceable support of the US, through the Department of Defense and the US Army, as well as close cooperation and synchronization with them. On his part, General Howard, expressed his high appreciation for the achievements of the Ministry of Defense and the KSF so far and assured them of support in development processes in the future. Minister Mehaj and General Jashari reiterated the position of General Howard that the Republic of Kosovo stands strongly by the United States and its allies, on the path of Euro-Atlantic integration and in the service of regional, continental, and global peace, security and stability.



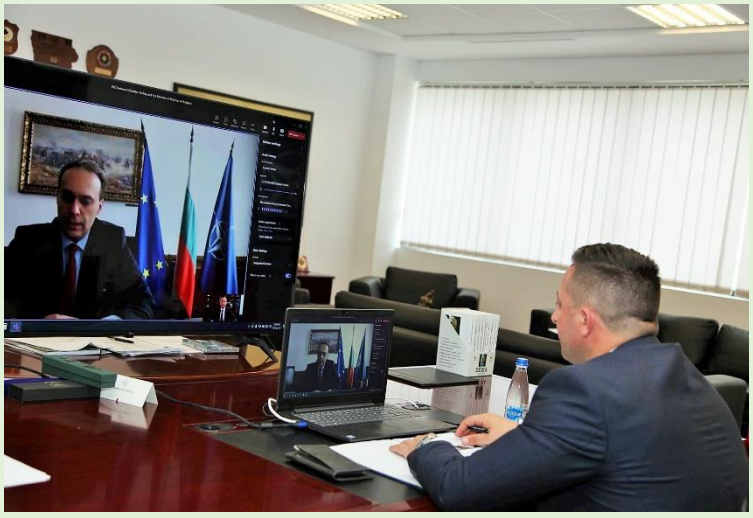
KOSOVO AND ISRAEL INTENSIFY BILATERAL COOPERATION IN THE FIELD OF DEFENSE

The Minister of Defense, Armend Mehaj, hosted the Israeli Minister Esawi Frej. On this occasion, the intensification of bilateral cooperation was confirmed. Minister Mehaj and Minister Frej discussed the overall cooperation between the two countries, including in the field of security and defense. From his part, Minister Frey expressed his readiness for mutual support and success.

MINISTER MEHAJ RECEIVES ISRAELI AMBASSADOR TO KOSOVO, TAMAR ZIV

In April, Minister Mehaj hosted the Ambassador of Israel to our country, Tamar Ziv. On this occasion, Minister Mehaj congratulated Ambassador Ziv on taking office, expressing the will and full readiness for cooperation between the two countries in the field of security and defense.

MINISTER MEHAJ HAD A VTC WITH THE NEW MINISTER OF DEFENSE OF BULGARIA, DRAGOMIR ZAKOV



Minister Mehaj had a video tele-conference with his counterpart, the new Minister of Defense of Bulgaria, Dragomir Zakov. In addition to congratulating him on taking office, Minister Mehaj discussed with Minister Zakov the possibility of bilateral cooperation, as two countries in the Balkans region, and taking into account Bulgaria as a NATO member.

MILITARY COOPERATION DEEPEN BETWEEN THE REPUBLIC OF KOSOVO AND THE REPUBLIC OF LATVIA

KSF Commander, Lieutenant General Bashkim Jashari, in a meeting with the Chief of Defense of the Republic of Latvia, Lieutenant General Leonids Kalnins expressed gratitude for the contribution of the Latvian contingent, within KFOR for maintaining the stability and security of Kosovo since 2000. He reiterated our country's aspirations for NATO membership and the strategic military direction of Kosovo. The two generals pledged to boost military co-operation between the two countries, including training, joint exercises, and the exchange of experiences.

MINISTRY OF DEFENSE OF THE REPUBLIC OF KOSOVO AND MINISTRY OF DEFENSE OF NORTH MACEDONIA WITH MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING FOR COOPERATION IN THE FIELDS OF DEFENSE AND SECURITY

The Minister of Defense, Armend Mehaj and his counterpart from the Republic of North Macedonia, the Minister of Defense, Slavjanka Petrovska, at the meeting held in April, signed a Memorandum of Understanding regarding the cooperation in the fields of defense and security. On this occasion, Minister Mehaj stressed that this Memorandum aims to coordinate and synchronize the legal framework, measures, actions, and activities that ensure the most successful implementation of all our agreements. On her part, Minister Petrovska expressed her readiness to deepen bilateral cooperation between the two countries, offering the experience of the process of integration into Euro-Atlantic structures, through which North Macedonia went through, as well as support in relevant processes from the level of NATO member country and the vision for peace, security and sustainability in our region and beyond.

MINISTER MEHAJ IN MEETING WITH FORMER NATO SUPREME COMMANDER, GENERAL WESLEY CLARK

In April, Minister Mehaj hosted in a meeting the former supreme commander of NATO, at the same time our national hero, the four-star general, Wesley Clark. This meeting is a continuation of the regular communications of Minister Mehaj with General Clark, of great importance in the journey of the Ministry of Defense and the KSF towards the realization of strategic goals.Minister Mehaj in his statement stressed that General Clark, in addition to his great personality in our minds and hearts, remains our clearest guide in the process of developing and achieving our strategic goals.

CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS OF SPECIAL IMPORTANCE IN THE POLICY-MAKING PROCESS IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE

Cooperation with civil society organizations is very important in the policy-making process in the Ministry of Defense and in general in our institutional system. The Minister of Defense, Armend Mehaj, stated this during a meeting with representatives of civil society organizations. This meeting was held in the framework of the implementation of policies for inter-institutional cooperation, civil society and the media.

On this occasion, Minister Mehaj, accompanied by Deputy Minister Shemsi Syla, informed the participants about the achievements made so far, developments in the process and objectives for the future, expressing gratitude and high appreciation for the role and contribution of civil society organizations in these achievements. In the end, the participants highly appreciated this initiative of Minister Mehaj, agreeing that this cooperation will be continuous in the future, in the service of the common good.

PLANNING PROCESS FOR PARTICIPATION IN "DEFENDER-EUROPE ‘23" HAS COMMENCED

The Ministry of Defense through the General Staff of the KSF as well as all command and staff structures of all levels of the KSF, has commenced the planning process for strong participation in Exercise “Defender Europe ‘23”. Minister Mehaj congratulated the officers, non-commissioned officers, and employees in the KSF General Staff and wished a good start to the largest training enterprise in our history "Defender-Europe'23", together with the forces of 28 allied countries, led by US Forces Command for Europe and Africa. After the success of last year, the Republic of Kosovo, as a host country and the KSF with over a thousand maneuvering troops, in addition to engaging in the command and staff structures of the multinational task force, aims to successfully realize its part of operational and tactical responsibility. The main objective of the Ministry of Defense for 2022/23 is the development of operational capabilities and capacities for the protection of the territorial integrity, independence, and state sovereignty of our country.

MINISTER MEHAJ AT THE "ISOA 2022" CONFERENCE

Upon the invitation of the International Association of US Stability Operations, Minister Mehaj, accompanied by the Deputy Commander of the KSF, Major General Enver Cikaqi, participated in the Conference "ISOA 2022", organized in Stuttgart, Germany. In his speech, held at this conference, Minister Mehaj said that this is a great way to get to know each other, exchange ideas and opinions and understand each other's views. Speaking about the security situation in Europe and in the world, Minister Mehaj said that the destabilizing security situation in Russia and Ukraine affects Europe and the Balkans**.** He further stressed that as a free and democratic country, Kosovo strongly supports Ukraine and condemns Russia's occupation of Ukraine. "We stand by committed to our partners and the values of democracy. The main goal of our country is membership in NATO and the EU ", said Minister Mehaj. At the end of the speech, Minister Mehaj stressed that Kosovo has created 10 free economic zones that offer favorable geographical location, favorable business environment, lower operating costs, ready-to-use infrastructure, rental of business premises and other favorable conditions.

"For this reason, I invite each of you to visit Kosovo and see the potential for investment and opportunities for cooperation," said Minister Mehaj.

During this conference, Minister Mehaj, in addition to his presentation at the conference sessions, will also meet with prominent US military personalities, leaders of well-known companies in the US defense industry, experts, etc.

"We stand by our partners and the values of democracy. The main goal of our country is membership in NATO and the EU ", Minister Mehaj

During the three days of the conference "ISOA 2022", held in Germany, in addition to discussions on the security situation in the region and the world, Minister Mehaj presented in panels and separate meetings the potential and economic opportunities offered by the Republic of Kosovo for investments to various companies, especially in the defense industry. He also stressed that the preparations for the establishment of the Defense Agency is in function of these investments, creating an easy communication between investors and the country. He further added that other facilities create important geographical and strategic position, road infrastructure and modern international airport that offers easy access to regional and world markets, 0% export tax, etc. He also mentioned the fact that the Republic of Kosovo has a young population, where almost 2/3 of the population in Kosovo is of working age.

TRANSFER OF THE AUTHORITY OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE NATO (NALT) ADVISORY AND LIASION TEAM

In April, a special ceremony was held regarding the transfer of authority of the NATO Advisory and Liaison Team Director (NALT). The Minister of Defense, Armend Mehaj, emphasized on this occasion that the Ministry of Defense and the Kosovo Security Force were established, built, and developed to this day with the vital support of our friends, members, and partners of NATO. Minister Mehaj emphasized that the role of NALT in this regard has been and is continuously very important. In addition to appreciating the contribution of NALT, Minister Mehaj expressed his gratitude, and highest appreciation for the leadership of General Rüter, in which case for the contribution he awarded the medal "Outstanding Service" with the highest distinction that defines proven commitment, contribution, professionalism, and leadership. On the other hand, Minister Mehaj welcomed General Hoppe.

"In addition to the individual support of NATO partner countries, since the beginning of the work of the Ministry and the Force, the support through the NATO Advisory and Liaison Team has been and is of particular importance. The main strategic goal is the membership of the Republic of Kosovo in NATO, therefore the main priority is to build the operational capabilities and capacities of the KSF according to NATO standards",
Minister Mehaj.

APRIL 22, THE EARTH DAY

On the occasion of Earth Day, April 22, the Minister of Defense, Armend Mehaj, visited the city of Shtime, where together with the mayor, Qemajl Aliu, as well as the KSF service members and municipal officials, have demonstrated as always the support of the Ministry of Defense and the KSF, for the protection of the environment everywhere in our country. On this occasion, in the cemetery of the nation's martyrs in Shtime, seedlings were planted, as a powerful symbol of their immortality for all citizens of the Republic of Kosovo.

IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE WAS MARKED APRIL 23, THE TURKISH COMMUNITY DAY

On the occasion of marking the April 23rd, the Turkish Community Day, the Minister of Defense, Armend Mehaj, accompanied by the Deputy Minister Adnan Rexheplar, organized a round table, which was attended by many prominent political and military personalities of local and international institutions and of the Republic of Turkey.

Minister Mehaj emphasized that this community has its respected place in institutions of the Republic of Kosovo and that this respect has been earned thanks to the commitment in the institutions of Kosovo and honest work.

He stressed that he is committed to increase the number of members of other minority communities, including the Turkish community, in the Ministry of Defense and the KSF.

IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE ON APRIL 8 WAS MARKED THE INTERNATIONAL ROMA DAY

In marking the International Roma Day, the Minister of Defense, Armend Mehaj, hosted in a festive meeting the representatives of the Roma community and the KSF military from this community. On this occasion, Minister Mehaj expressed readiness to support this community in the recruitment and integration process in the KSF.

GENERAL JASHARI HOSTED FOR A MEETING THE KFOR COMMANDER, GENERAL KAJAR

The KSF Commander, Lieutenant General Bashkim Jashari, hosted in a meeting the Commander of KFOR, Major General, Ferenc Kajar. In this meeting, the two generals talked about the latest developments in the Republic of Kosovo, on which occasion General Jashari thanked General Kajar for the commitment of KFOR in providing general security in Kosovo. Also, General Jashari informed his interlocutor about the general achievements of the KSF, adding that all operational capacities of the KSF are developed according to NATO standards, in order to be interactive with the forces of member countries and NATO partners.

The KSF Commander, Lieutenant General Bashkim Jashari hosted in a meeting a high delegation of non-commissioned officers led by Sergeant Major Easton, Chief NCO of the European Command of American Forces (EUCOM). General Jashari thanked the delegation for the continuous support for the Non-Commissioned Officer Choir as well as for the joint plans for further development.

CLOSING CEREMONY OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION “BEST SOLDIER 2022”

The closing ceremony of the Traditional International Competition "Best Soldier 2022" was held on April 29, in the “Adem Jashari” camp of the KSF in Pristina. On this occasion, soldier Haxhi Krasniqi was announced “Best KSF Soldier 2022” followed by soldiers Ejdon Mulaku and Qëndrim Asllanaj. While the soldier from Canada, Simon Buies, was announced the best international soldier, followed by the American soldier, Jaron Springer and the Turkish soldier, Oliver Verrete. The Deputy Minister of Defense, Shemsi Syla, who was present at the ceremony, stressed that the primary goal of the KSF in the competition for the best soldier is to increase military capabilities, fitness and selecting the best. He added that this one-week competition, now already traditional, promotes values, professionalism and helps participants share experiences with colleagues from partner countries.

Soldier Haxhi Krasniqi- “The best soldier of the KSF 2022”

In the competition “Best Soldier 2022” participated 39 competitors from Kosovo, Albania, Croatia, Northern Macedonia, Canada, Iowa (USA), and Turkey, as part of KFOR.

Canadian soldier, Simon Buies - Best International Soldier

“The participation of competitors from the armies of partner countries in this competition proves the high degree of cooperation with partner countries and that the KSF is a professional disciplined, motivated and contributing security force in the region and beyond”,

Deputy Minister of Defense, Shemsi Syla.