

How Britain and America Backed Kosovo Jihadists



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APR 24, 2022



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On 24th March 1999, NATO launched a 78-day-long bombing campaign against Yugoslavia. Still hailed by the Western mainstream as a successful ‘humanitarian intervention’, the true story of the conflict’s roots and legacy is far darker, and points to extensive collaboration between London, Washington and extremist Islamist forces.

The Kosovo War’s official narrative states Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic intended to create a ‘Greater Serbia’ via ‘ethnic cleansing’ of Kosovo’s Albanian population. Such was the genocidal terror and violence unleashed against civilians, NATO had no choice but to intervene militarily, and avert the bloody eradication of hundreds of thousands of people.

In reality, the bulk of the atrocities committed in Kosovo took place *after* the NATO campaign began, and certainly weren’t restricted to Serb forces. German reporter Franz Josef Hutsch, a former army major who spent several months embedded with the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) in 1998 and 1999, testified at Milosevic’s war crimes tribunal that the terrorist group deliberately provoked Serb forces into excessive responses, and were responsible for much of the purge of Albanians from the region.

Likewise, Paul Watson of the LA Times, one of the few US journalists on the ground in Kosovo during the bombing, repeatedly reported during and after the conflict he never once saw any violence directed at Albanian civilians by Serb forces. The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, a United Nations body established to prosecute crimes committed during the Yugoslav Wars, eventually concluded Belgrade at most tried to remove rather than eradicate the Albanian population. Milosevic,

who died in a UN prison in 2006, was posthumously exonerated of all charges.

One aspect of the story rarely explored is collusion between the KLA, Al-Qaeda, and the US and British military and intelligence apparatus in the years preceding the conflict. This intrigue was quite so deep, cohering, and long-running, it strongly suggests Western powers determinedly set out to break Kosovo away from Serbia in service of Yugoslavia's complete destruction. and were intensely relaxed about using extreme Islamic fundamentalist elements as their 'ground troops' in the process.

Killing Fields

The KLA was comprised of ethnic Albanians committed to securing not only an independent Kosovo, but a Greater Albania — an irredentist federation spanning Serbia, Montenegro, Greece and Macedonia — through insurrectionary violence.

The exact date of the KLA's founding is a matter of debate. Some suggest it stretches as far back as 1989, when Milosevic revoked Kosovan autonomy. The group's campaign of terror began in February 1996, when its fighters attacked police stations and Yugoslavian government officials, while bombing Serbian refugee camps created in the aftermath of brutal civil wars in Croatia and Bosnia.

German political scientist Matthias Kuntzel has revealed Germany's foreign intelligence service was instrumental in recruiting, training and arming KLA fighters. Berlin had designs on Kosovo's immense resource wealth. The Stari Trg mining complex, dubbed by Chris Hedges "the most valuable piece of real estate" in the Balkans, was a ripe source of coal, lead, zinc, cadmium, gold and silver, worth at least US\$5 billion at the time. Strikingly, the mine provided material for Nazi U-Boat batteries following the April 1941 Axis invasion of Yugoslavia.



Yugoslav Spomenik 'Monument to Fallen Miners' in North Mitrovica, Kosovo

After the KLA's initial burst of savagery, similar strikes were carried out every few months, leading the US State Department to classify the group as a terrorist organisation at the start of 1998. Its analysis noted the KLA was financed by the drugs trade, organised crime, a variety of governments — most notably the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia — and wealthy benefactors in the Middle East, including Osama bin Laden.

Al-Qaeda's chief established a base of operations in Albania in 1994, precipitating the steady flow of jihadists from over half a dozen countries in the Middle East into Kosovo subsequently. One KLA unit was even led by the brother of Ayman al-Zawahiri, Al-Qaeda's cofounder and bin Laden's deputy.

Despite Washington's designation and UN Security Council Resolution 1160 banning "external support for terrorist activity in Kosovo, including finance, arms and training" in March 1998, the CIA and US special forces secretly armed and trained KLA operatives in Albania throughout the year.

They were then dispatched to Kosovo to assassinate Serb politicians and policemen, and harass and intimidate local Albanians insufficiently enthusiastic about independence. These efforts significantly strengthened the KLA. By the end of 1998, its fighters numbered over 30,000, and they were in control of several areas of Kosovo.

In 2001, James Bissett, former Canadian ambassador to Yugoslavia and Albania, revealed the purpose of this strategy was explicitly to inflame and escalate tensions, in order to create a pretext for Western intervention:

“The hope was that with Kosovo in flames NATO could intervene and in so doing, not only overthrow Milosevic...but more importantly, provide the aging and increasingly irrelevant military organization with a reason for its continued existence.”

Moral Combat - Nato at War: Excerpt 1: The Reality of the Early Confl...



This objective was well-understood by KLA leaders. In a 2000 BBC documentary, *Moral Combat: NATO At War*, Hashim Thaci, a key KLA figure elected President of Kosovo in April 2016, said attacks were specifically carried out against Serb authorities in order to “bring retaliation

against civilians.” Dug Gorani, an Albanian Kosovar negotiator unconnected to the KLA, told the same programme:

“The more civilians were killed, the chances of international intervention became bigger, and the KLA of course realised that. There was this foreign diplomat who once told me, ‘Look, unless you pass the quota of five thousand deaths you’ll never have anybody permanently present in Kosovo from foreign diplomacy.’”

Washington’s Defence Intelligence Agency also enlisted the help of British foreign spy agency MI6 to arm and train the KLA, with the support of London’s Special Air Service (SAS) and private security companies. The SAS was also heavily involved in the planning and execution of NATO’s bombing campaign. With the KLA’s assistance, its operatives were inserted into Kosovo in the early hours of 21st March 1999 to locate Serb military units, materiel and supply lines, and potential invasion routes for NATO ground forces. Once the campaign began, the KLA and SAS called in the majority of the alliance’s airstrikes against military and civilian targets.

GERMANY: KOSOVO: BLAIR MEETS WITH LEADER OF KLA, HASHIM ...



However, despite this intimate relationship, British government ministers consistently - and vehemently - denied London was supporting the KLA in any way. Then-Foreign Secretary Robin Cook told Parliament 19th October 1998:

“The stated objective of the Kosovo Liberation Army is...to forge a greater Albania. There is no place on the international map for a greater Albania, any more than there is for a greater Serbia or a greater Croatia...That is why the objective of our policy is to ensure that the elected, democratic politicians of Kosovo, and not the gunmen, are left in control of Kosovo.”

Even then-Prime Minister Tony Blair repudiated any such suggestion while the conflict was well underway, the links indisputable, and journalists openly referring to the KLA as NATO's “eyes and ears” on the ground in Kosovo. He stated 13th April 1999:

“Our position on training and arming the KLA [is] we are not in favour of doing so, not least because of the UN embargo that is in place. We have no plans to change that.”

Exporting Terror

Once the bombing started, Muslims residing in Britain travelled to Kosovo to join the ground fight. Their passage was permitted, if not outright facilitated, by London.

This phenomenon has been a feature of many ‘civil wars’ in West Asia, and elsewhere. During the Soviet war in Afghanistan, mujahideen fighters were trained at a variety of camps in Britain, often by Afghans residing in the UK. Rahmatullah Safi, a former senior officer in the royal Afghan army, tutored

as many as 8,000 insurrectionists, and continued to live in the UK well into the 1990s, when he was regarded by the UN as the Taliban's key representative in Europe.

Similarly, several Libyan rebel fighters involved in the violent overthrow of Muammar Gaddafi, including Manchester bomber Salman Abedi and his father. Many were subject to 'control orders' restricting their movements, requiring them to remain at a registered address for up to 16 hours a day, and limiting their access to communications resources. Yet, they were offered an 'open door' by British authorities to fight in Tripoli in 2011.

Furthermore, mujahideen in other parts of the former Yugoslavia — particularly Bosnia, where thousands fought on the side of the Bosnian Muslim Army 1992-1995 — were diverted to Kosovo at the behest of Washington and London. Intriguingly, British army military intelligence specialist James Le Mesurier came with them. He was chief intelligence coordinator, a role he took up in Pristina, Kosovo's capital, once NATO's bombing campaign started. He later worked for a variety of private security companies, before founding the controversial White Helmets in Turkey in 2013.

Al-Qaeda was not the only Islamist group with which MI6 colluded in Kosovo. Former US Justice Department prosecutor and army intelligence officer John Loftus claimed following the 7th July 2005 London Underground bombings British intelligence recruited three senior al-Muhajiroun figures — Bakri Mohammed, Abu Hamza and Haroon Rashid Aswat — in 1996 to influence terrorist activities in the Balkans.

This connection is particularly notable given Aswat was a central figure in investigations of the network that facilitated the 7/7 tube bombings. In November 2004, he met with the attack's alleged ringleader Mohammad Sidique Khan and his chief accomplice Shehzad Tanweer in Pakistan, then left Britain for India mere hours before the attacks. Suspicions he remained a British intelligence asset during this period have never been satisfactorily resolved.

7/7: Crime and Prejudice (HQ)



Another individual trained at the Kosovo camps was Omar Khan Sharif, a British-born Muslim who in 2003 attempted to carry out a suicide bombing attack in a bar in Tel Aviv, Israel. He apparently got cold feet at the last minute and fought his way out while his accomplice, Londoner Asif Hanif, killed himself, two musicians and a waitress. Sharif's decomposing body was later found floating near a beach. The specifics of his last hours remain a mystery 16 years later, although he attended al-Muhajiroun meetings in Britain, was an admirer of Abu Hamza, and met Sidique Khan in 2001.

Covert US and British support for the KLA endured long-after NATO's bombing ended in June 1999. Once Milosevic was displaced in 2000 and the death of Yugoslavia complete, the Army's brutal struggle for Greater Albania extended to Macedonia and southern Serbia. Washington supported this, at least initially. NATO ground forces stood idly by while KLA insurgents pushed past a five-kilometre-wide 'exclusion zone' armed with mortars, and other lethal weapons. Yet, other Western powers were considerably less enthused. A European Kosovo Force battalion commander remarked in March 2001:

“The CIA has been allowed to run riot in Kosovo with a private army designed to overthrow Milosevic. Now he’s gone the US State Department seems incapable of reining in its bastard army.”

London ostensibly disapproved of the KLA’s expanded jihad. Yet, the group’s commanders, now battling under the National Liberation Army (NLA) banner, were trained by the SAS at camps in northern Albania 1998/9. One was charged with managing the flow of weapons and fighters into Macedonia, while another coordinated assaults on the Tetovo, a city teeming with Kosovo Albanian refugees. NLA commander Gezim Ostreni was even trained by the SAS to head the UN-sponsored Kosovo Protection Corps, intended to replace the KLA.

NATO Secretary-General Lord Robertson dubbed the NLA “a bunch of murderous thugs whose objective is to destroy a democratic Macedonia.” Despite this, Washington provided extensive technical and material support, to the extent of evacuating 400 of the group’s fighters when they were encircled by Macedonian forces. That backing was pivotal to the NLA occupying and controlling almost a third of Macedonian territory, come August 2001.

Macedonia: Rebels: Ethnic Albanian rebel forces near the border



At that point, due to pressure from NATO member states and the European Union, Washington rescinded its assistance to the NLA. Only then did the US, with European negotiators, pressure Slav and Albanian Macedonian community leaders to ink a peace deal, on August 13th 2001. In return for constitutional and administrative changes ensuring equal rights for Albanians in Macedonia, NLA insurgents stopped fighting and handed in many of their weapons to NATO, while receiving amnesty from prosecution. Mere weeks later, the 9/11 attacks took place.

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1 reply by Kit Klarenberg



Archie1954 Archie1954's Substack Apr 24, 2022 ❤️ Liked by Kit Klarenberg

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