



Français	Home	Contact Us	Help	Search	canada.gc.ca
----------	------	------------	------	--------	--------------

[Home](#) > [Research](#) > [Responses to Information Requests](#)

## RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

[New Search](#) | [About RIRs](#) | [Help](#)

The Board		ZZZ102898.E	27 August 2008
About the Board			
Biographies			
Organization Chart			
Employment			
Legal and Policy			
References			
Publications			
Tribunal		Jane's Information Group, an intelligence provider used by business, government and military decision-makers (n.d.), reports that the Albanian National Army (Armata Kombetare Shqiptare, AKSh) has existed since 1999 (6 Apr. 2005). In slight contrast, a <i>Southeast European Times</i> ( <i>SE Times</i> ) article states that the AKSh was established in 2001 (14 Nov. 2007).  A Kosovo-based Research Associate at Durham University who specializes in security matters stated in a telephone interview with the Research Directorate that the AKSh is a pan-Albanian movement that seeks to unify all Albanian-speaking territories (Research Associate 30 July 2008; AP 21 Nov. 2007) including Albania, Kosovo, southern Serbia, western Macedonia, southern Montenegro ( <i>PHW</i> 2007 2007, 19-20) and northern Greece (Research Associate 30 July 2008; see also BIRN 2008). Similarly, Freedom House states that the AKSh supports "creating a 'Greater Albania' in the Balkans" (2008). In contrast, Arberi, identified by two media sources as the leader of the AKSh (B92 21 Jan. 2008; PanARMENIAN.net 8 Jan. 2008), stated in January 2008 that the AKSh is "not fighting for pan-Albanian unification, but to protect the territorial integrity of Kosovo if it is threatened" (B92 21 Jan. 2008).  According to an article in the <i>SE Times</i> , an AKSh paramilitary commander stated in an Associated Press (AP) interview that the AKSh's "enemies are Serbia and the Guard of Czar Lazar" ( <i>SE Times</i> 14 Nov. 2007). The Guard of Czar Lazar [also called the Tsar Lazar Guard (US 30 Apr. 2008)] is a Serbian paramilitary organization designated by the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) as a "terrorist" organization ( <i>SE Times</i> 14 Nov. 2007; AP 21 Nov. 2007; see also US 30 Apr. 2008). <i>Country Reports on Terrorism</i> states that, in June 2007, the AKSh spokesperson, Gafurr Adili (US 30 Apr. 2008; see also AP 21 Nov. 2007), told media officials in Kosovo that "AKSh members in several Kosovo towns had distributed leaflets threatening violence if the Serbian paramilitary group Tsar Lazar Guard ventured into Kosovo for the annual June 28th commemoration of the 1389 Battle of Kosovo" (US 30 Apr. 2008).	
Refugee Protection Division			
Immigration Division			
Immigration Appeal Division			
Decisions			
Forms			
Statistics			
Research			Recent Research
Research Program			
National Documentation Packages			
Issue Papers and Country Fact Sheets			
Responses to Information Requests			
Recent Research			
Media Centre			
News			
Information Sheets			
Media Relations			
Proactive Disclosure			

### Area of operations

With respect to the AKSh's area of operations, the United States (US) Department of State's *Country Reports on Terrorism* states that the "AKSh had long claimed to operate only in areas outside of KFOR [Kosovo Force] or Kosovo Protection Corps control, and was reportedly also active in southern Serbia and western Macedonia" (US 30 Apr. 2008; see also PanARMENIAN.net 8 Jan. 2008). *Country Reports on Terrorism* also indicates that AKSh spokesperson Gafurr Adili [also spelled Gafur (PHW 2007 2007, 20)] stated that the AKSh was "'filling a void' created by KFOR's alleged abandonment of several villages near Serbia proper in the municipalities of Podujevo and Kamenica" (US 30 Apr. 2008). According to the Research Associate, the AKSh is based in eastern Albania and operates primarily in the border region of northeastern Albania with Kosovo (30 July 2008).

## Membership

The Research Associate stated that, on a regional level, the AKSh has grown out of various branches of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) (30 July 2008). The AKSh's connection to the KLA is corroborated by a Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty article which states that the AKSh "includes former members of the Albanian nationalist movement that spawned the separatist Kosovo Liberation Army ..." (8 Nov. 2007). With respect to the size of the AKSh, the *SE Times* states that the AKSh has roughly 12,000 members (14 Nov. 2007; see also AP 21 Nov. 2007). According to the Research Associate, it is difficult to determine the size of the AKSh because it is a clandestine organization (30 July 2008). Similarly, the AP states that "[i]t is unclear how large the group is" (21 Nov. 2007). Jane's Information Group states that the AKSh, "as is typical of small clandestine groups, ... is hard to define and prone to splintering" (6 Apr. 2005).

## Status of the AKSh in Kosovo

The Research Associate noted that UNMIK considers the AKSh illegal (30 July 2008). This is corroborated by *Political Handbook of the World 2007* (PHW 2007) and *Country Reports on Terrorism* which state that UNMIK declared the AKSh a "terrorist" organization (PHW 2007 2007, 20) in 2003 (US 30 Apr. 2008; B92 21 Jan. 2008; see also PanARMENIAN.net 8 Jan. 2008). According to B92, a Serbian media organization recognized for responsible journalism and human rights advocacy (B92 n.d.), UNMIK's decision to declare the AKSh a "terrorist organization" followed a 12 April 2003 railway bombing attributed to the AKSh (ibid. 21 Jan. 2008). The Research Associate stated that, in Kosovo, the AKSh is not permitted to organize, establish political and military structures or advertise with badges or flags (30 July 2008; see also *SE Times* 14 Nov. 2007).

## Activities

*Political Handbook of the World 2007* provides the following information on the AKSh:

After being active in Kosovo, Macedonia, and Serbia in the first years of the current decade, the AKSh was reported in 2004 to have gone "completely underground" following the arrest by NATO of several AKSh leaders.

In December 2004 one AKSh leader, Gafur Adili, was placed under house arrest in Tirana for his alleged encouragement of AKSh members to "intervene" in Macedonia. Meanwhile, another reported AKSh leader, Idajet Beqiri, was released from prison in Tirana after the Court of Appeals overturned his conviction for "inciting interethnic hatred." (PHW 2007 2007, 20)

The AKSh has claimed responsibility for numerous bombings in Kosovo (AP 21 Nov. 2007; BIRN 2008), Macedonia and southern Serbia (AP 21 Nov. 2007). According to the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN), the AKSh has made threats of attack and war in Macedonia related to its demands for the

unification of Albanians (2008). A number of sources report that, in October 2007, members of the AKSh appeared on a Radio Television Kosovo (RTK) broadcast stating that they were prepared to defend Kosovo from Serbian threats (US 30 Apr. 2008; Freedom House 2008; see also Research Associate 30 July 2008). Similarly, several sources state that AKSh members have conducted patrols of northern Kosovo towns (AP 21 Nov. 2007; *SE Times* 14 Nov. 2007; BIRN 2008) in order to deter Serbian threats (AP 21 Nov. 2007; *SE Times* 14 Nov. 2007). *Political Handbook of the World 2007* states that, in 2005, Serbians claimed that the AKSh had targeted Serbs in Kosovo (*PHW 2007* 2007, 20).

According to the Research Associate, the AKSh engages in some political campaigning and may be funded by members of the Albanian diaspora (30 July 2008). The Research Associate also stated that the AKSh has a website which does not appear under its own name (30 July 2008). The Research Directorate located a website entitled "Iliriapress" which displays the AKSh insignia on a number of its pages but does not elaborate on the organization (Iliriapress n.d.a; *ibid.* n.d.b). Rather, the website contains statements about the separation of Albanians from Albania after the Second World War and cultural references to Kosovo and Prishtina (Iliriapress n.d.a; *ibid.* n.d.b).

### **Forced recruitment**

With respect to forced recruitment, the Research Associate stated that given the family and clan-based nature of Albanian society, it is likely that younger men belonging to a family in which older men are AKSh supporters would face pressure to follow the family political line to some degree (30 July 2008). The Research Associate emphasized that Albanian families are often identified by political labels and that it is extremely difficult to be apolitical (30 July 2008). If a young man's father, brothers and uncles are a part of the AKSh, it may follow that the young man will face pressure to be involved (Research Associate 30 July 2008). Corroborating or further information on forced recruitment could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

### **State protection**

Information on whether state protection is available to persons targeted by the AKSh was scarce among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate. However, *Country Reports on Terrorism* states that in 2007, international prosecutors and the Kosovo Special Prosecutor's Office (KSPO) filed an indictment against the AKSh and were investigating the political wing of the AKSh, the Front for Albanian National Unification, for activities related to "terrorism" (30 Apr. 2008). However, *Country Reports on Terrorism* also states that, in 2007, the AKSh "continued to intimidate Kosovo citizens" (30 Apr. 2008). Intimidation by the AKSh was corroborated by the Research Associate who stated that the AKSh has targeted persons for a variety of reasons, in particular, political issues (30 July 2008). The following information is provided in a 2006 report from the Centre for OSCE Research (CORE):

In the first half of 2005, crime reports were dominated by a small number of politically motivated attacks on UNMIK and OSCE premises as well as against moderate politicians such as President Rugova, apparently conducted by the Albanian extremist group the Albanian National Army [AKSh]. (Stodiek 2006, 30-31)

According to the Research Associate, persons who are at risk of harassment by the AKSh are those who are "actively involved in the reconciliation process and Serbian returns to Kosovo" (30 July 2008). In particular, the Research Associate was aware of a case of an UNMIK employee being targeted by the AKSh (30 July 2008). Initially, the individual, who was working in a forensic lab identifying victims from mass graves, was determining the identities of ethnic Albanians who had been killed by Serbs (Research Associate 30 July 2008). Once the individual began

working on the identification of Serb victims, the individual began to receive threats that were sufficient to cause the person to fear for their well-being (ibid.). The Research Associate noted that in this case, a person's work for the international community led them to be threatened by the AKSh (ibid.).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

References

Associated Press (AP). 21 November 2007. "Ethnic Albanian Paramilitary Group Claims to Have Support Throughout Kosovo." (*International Herald Tribune*) <<http://www.iht.com/articles/ap/2007/11/21/europe/EU-GEN-Albania-Kosovo-Paramilitaries.php>> [Accessed 2 July 2008]

B92 [Belgrade]. 21 January 2008. "Kosovo Terror Group Issues Fresh Threats." <[http://www.b92.net/eng/news/politics-article.php?yyyy=2008&mm=01&dd=21&nav\\_id=47122](http://www.b92.net/eng/news/politics-article.php?yyyy=2008&mm=01&dd=21&nav_id=47122)> [Accessed 17 July 2008]

\_\_\_\_\_. N.d. "About Us." <[http://www.b92.net/about\\_us/index-eng.html](http://www.b92.net/about_us/index-eng.html)> [Accessed 20 Aug. 2008]

Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN). 2008. "Armed Groups Patrolling Kosovo." <<http://www.birn.eu.com/en/106/15/5147/>> [Accessed 2 July 2008]

Freedom House. 2008. "Kosovo." *Freedom in the World 2008*. <<http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=363&year=2008&country=7543>> [Accessed 31 July 2008]

Iliriapress. N.d.a. "Albania." <<http://www.geocities.com/lajme8reja/Albania.html?1009193965860>> [Accessed 31 July 2008]

\_\_\_\_\_. N.d.b. "Prishtina." <<http://www.geocities.com/lajme8reja/prishtina.html?1009181142840>> [Accessed 31 July 2008]

Jane's Information Group. 6 April 2005. "Albanian National Army (AKSh), Groups - International - Active." <<http://www.janes.com/extracts/extract/jwit/jwita000.html>> [Accessed 17 July 2008]

\_\_\_\_\_. N.d. "Company Overview." <<http://www.janes.com/aboutus/overview.html>> [Accessed 26 Aug. 2008]

PanARMENIAN.net [Yerevan]. 8 January 2008. "Albanian National Army Preparing for War?" <<http://panarmenian.net/news/eng/?nid=24501>> [Accessed 20 Aug. 2008]

*Political Handbook of the World 2007 (PHW 2007)*. 2007. "Albania," pp 12-20. Edited by Arthur Banks, Thomas Muller and William Overstreet. Washington, DC: CQ Press.

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL). 8 November 2007. Valentinas Mite. "A Firefight in Northwestern Macedonia, Mostly Populated by Ethnic Albanians, Has Left Eight People Dead." <<http://www.rferl.org/content/Article/1079098.html>> [Accessed 2 July 2008]

Research Associate, Durham University [United Kingdom]. 30 July 2008. Telephone interview.

*Southeast European Times (SE Times)* [US European Command]. 14 November 2007. "Report: ANA Paramilitaries Patrolling Northern Kosovo Towns."  
<[http://www.setimes.com/cocoon/setimes/xhtml/en\\_GB/features/setimes/features/2007/11/14/feature-01](http://www.setimes.com/cocoon/setimes/xhtml/en_GB/features/setimes/features/2007/11/14/feature-01)> [Accessed 2 July 2008]

Stodiek, Thorsten. 2006. Centre for OSCE Research (CORE). "The OSCE and the Creation of Multi-Ethnic Police Forces in the Balkans."  
<[http://www.akademischesnetzwerk-soe.net/download/CORE\\_Working\\_Paper\\_14.pdf](http://www.akademischesnetzwerk-soe.net/download/CORE_Working_Paper_14.pdf)> [Accessed 21 Aug. 2008]

United States (US). 30 April 2008. "Kosovo." Department of State. *Country Reports on Terrorism*. <<http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/crt/2007/103707.htm>> [Accessed 31 July 2008]

#### Additional Sources Consulted

**Publication:** *Revolutionary and Dissident Movements of the World*.

**Internet sites, including:** Amnesty International (AI), British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), *Child Soldiers Global Report 2008*,

European Country of Origin Information Network (ecoi.net), Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN), International Crisis Group.

---

 [Top of Page](#)

[Important Notices](#)

**The attached reproduction is a copy of an official work that is published by the Government of Canada. The reproduction has not been produced in affiliation with, or with the endorsement of the Government of Canada.**