



Institute for Democracy and Mediation
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REINTEGRATION DIFFICULTIES AND POST MISSION ADJUSTMENT OF ALBANIAN MILITARY PERSONNEL

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POLICY PAPER

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"As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them"

John F. Kennedy

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I. Executive Summary

Lately, media has commented often about a series of criminal events where some of the perpetrators were members of the (active or reservists) Albanian Armed Forces (AAF). Thus far, there has been no public discussion on the causes, motives and the most effective ways of reacting to the situation. The purpose of this research is to bring this issue under the spotlight by informing relevant stakeholders on the gravity of this phenomenon and by identifying some of the drivers that enable military personnel to engage in criminal, extremist or violent behaviors. Furthermore, this paper is also an attempt to stimulate a constructive debate with relevant stakeholders on the possible implications and future solutions for the problem. The research has focused on the use of prior academic literature to establish a baseline as well as in-field research based on expert discussions, structured interviews and surveys, and primary sources, such as institutional documents.

The research showed that there is clear association between the psychological effects of warfare and the tendency to engage in violent activities. Given the Albanian context, additional factors, such as low income and lack of psycho-social support, make the risk even higher. Many factors may affect soldiers' tendencies towards criminal behavior. However, most of them fall into the categories of *economic instability* and *lack of psycho-social support*. Although the common denominator identified by all experts (many of whom have been members of the AAF) and military personnel themselves was lack of economic security, as the profession of arms is highly demanding and stressful, maintaining a constant psycho-social support for service members can help break the negative tendencies of soldiers to lean towards violent and criminal behavior.

The Albanian Ministry of Defense (MoD) and the Armed Forces should invest in providing consistent support to its personnel in order to enhance the military's operational capabilities and reduce the risk of future involvement in criminal activities. They should be proactive and maintain a problem-solving approach, while focusing on preventing, supporting and the re-integrating soldiers in need. Because of the high risk involved with former soldiers becoming criminals, this issue deserves a more detailed attention. Otherwise, what Albania has witnessed thus far might very well be the tip of the iceberg.

II. Methodology

To best explain the phenomenon under the Albanian context, this research employs a mixed methodology approach. This includes:

- (1) Interviews with 3 experts on Albanian Military psycho-social services (one of them being an active duty officer), 3 experts on Albanian Military active to reservist duty services;
- (2) Academic literature to explain how research explains any of the events involving the criminal activity of Albanian military personnel;
- (3) Primary sources such as official institutional documents to illustrate the attempts (or lack of) of the institution to engage the phenomenon; and,
- (4) Structured interviews in the form of surveys with members of the AAF who have served in units, which have produced the biggest number of cases relating to this phenomenon.

Overall, 32 individuals were interviewed from the Albanian Special Forces, Commando Regiment and the 2nd Infantry Battalion. The structured interview has been spread accordingly among the different units, combat and non-combat veterans, and lastly, officers, non-commissioned officers (NCOs) and soldiers. The purpose of this methodology has been to present a holistic approach of the phenomenon in Albania by combining academic research data, expert opinions, factual institutional frameworks and finally the perceptions of service members 'on the field'.

III. Context

On 9 February 2017, two former members of the elite Commando Regiment of the Albanian Armed Forces conducted an armed robbery of 3.2 million USD. The money belonged to a local commercial bank and was being transported out the country by a private security company. This event forced the Minister of Interior to issue an order, which authorized the State Police "to provide temporary security for commercial banks' money transfers until private security companies met the required security standards."¹

Unfortunately, this is not the first time that former members of the Albanian Armed Forces have been involved in illegal activities. Since 2011, reserve and active members of the AAF have often been involved in robbery, drug trafficking, support for organized crime and even fighting in support of international terrorist organizations. In total, 24 member of the AAF have partaken in criminal or terrorist activities in these years.² Of these, 3 have been prosecuted for stealing weapons and ammunition, 5 have fought on behalf of the ISIS terrorist organization (making it between 5-7% of the overall number of Albanian foreign fighters to Syria)³ and 16 others have been involved in other major criminal activities from murders, cooperation with organized crime, drug smuggling and robberies.

Thus far, these events have been treated as mere criminal activities. Doing so has also placed a lid on attempts to understand the fundamental causes of what pushes the active or reservist troops to become criminals and terrorists. The strategy of 'responding' is simply an attempt to treat the symptoms rather than addressing the cause of the problem. This raises questions of whether our security institutions have ever viewed this as a problem and whether they have developed necessary *prevention* mechanisms by being proactive rather than reactive to the situation.

¹ Statement by Gjovalin Loka, Transportation Chief at the Albanian State Police, by Arbi Fortuzi, "Ministry of Interior Requests Enhancements in Transportation Security", Albanian Telegraphic Agency, 15 February 2017, accessed 15 April 2017, <https://www.ata.gov.al/rritja-e-sigurise-se-transportit-te-parave-nga-bankat-e-domosdoshme-masat-e-kerkuara-nga-ministria-e-brendshme/>.

² Annex A, Table 2. Note: Table 2 includes not only the cases of criminal involvement of members of the AAF, but also a case of suicide to illustrate the impact of PTSD on soldiers.

³ Report from the Albanian Prosecution Office in 2016; as quoted in "Balkan Jihadist: The Radicalization and Recruitment of Fighters in Syria and Iraq", *Balkan Investigative Reporting Network*, March 2016, pg. 8, accessed 10 April 2017, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/file/show/Balkan-Jihadists.pdf>.

IV. The Phenomenon as a Whole

Former soldiers have always faced difficulties in re-integrating into their society. This phenomenon stretches across different countries and timeframes. Although the effects of war trauma and re-integration difficulties were first observed and considered after the end of WWI, however, it wasn't until the aftermath of the Vietnam War when researchers began to link warfare experience with difficulties of re-integrating back into the society and involvement in criminal activities.⁴ The drivers of this phenomenon vary, but the ever-present ones seem to be *lack of economic stability, difficulties of integrating back into the society* and *stress*. In fact, studies of the most recent wars, Afghanistan and Iraq, have shown that stress prevails among the reasons why former soldiers find a difficult time re-integrating back into the society. Although the relation between military service (*by itself*) and criminality is still unclear⁵, scholars have suggested that "trauma, combat exposure, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder symptoms, substance abuse, and post deployment adjustment problems may be positive predictors of incarceration for veterans" and the risk of criminal behavior increases exponentially when two or more of these factors are present at the same time.⁶

One of the most commonly known outcomes of combat missions, and even military training, on soldiers, is Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Research unambiguously supports the theory that PTSD contributes to violence thus making soldiers more at risk of engaging in violent activities, be that at home, in their communities or even abroad.⁷ Furthermore, some of the most recent studies attribute a clear link between PTSD symptoms and suicide rates.⁸ A 2007 research conducted by clinical doctors found that veterans affected by PTSD have a 7-8 times higher chance of committing suicide.⁹ Studies have also revealed that PTSD rates have been higher during the Iraq and Afghanistan wars in comparison to any other conflict since

⁴ Michael D. White, Philip Mulvey, Andrew M. Fox & David Choate, 2012 "A Hero's Welcome? Exploring the Prevalence and Problems of Military Veterans in the Arrestee Population", *Justice Quarterly*, 29:2, 261, 2012, DOI: [10.1080/07418825.2011.560890](https://doi.org/10.1080/07418825.2011.560890).

⁵ Ibid., 265

⁶ McGuire, J., Rosenheck, R. A., & Kaspro, W. J. "Health Status, Service Use, and Costs among Veterans Receiving Outreach Services in Jail or Community Settings". *Psychiatric Services*, 42, 201-207, 2003.

⁷ Davis Morris, "War is Hell and the Hell Rubs off", *Slate Magazine*, 17 April 2014, accessed 02 April 2017, http://www.slate.com/articles/health_and_science/medical_examiner/2014/04/ptsd_and_violence_by_veterans_increased_murder_rates_related_to_war_experience.html.

⁸ Steven G. Koven, "PTSD and Suicides among Veterans: Recent Findings, Public Integrity", 2016, 1, DOI: [10.1080/10999922.2016.1248881](https://doi.org/10.1080/10999922.2016.1248881).

⁹ Zivin, K., Kim, M., McCarthy, J., Austin, K., Hoggatt, J., Walters, H., & Valenstein, M., "Suicide Mortality among Individuals Receiving Treatment for Depression in the Veterans Affairs Health System: Associations with Patient and Treatment Setting Characteristics", *American Journal of Public Health*, 97:12, 2007, 2193, DOI: [10.2105/ajph.2007.115477](https://doi.org/10.2105/ajph.2007.115477).

WWII, with 25% of the veterans being affected.¹⁰ Therefore, combat veterans, who have participated in these modern wars, have a higher chance of being affected by PTSD. Further research has also concluded that “hostility related to PTSD is greater in samples with combat experience compared to other traumatic events”¹¹ and that “veterans with PTSD and sub-threshold PTSD endorse aggression in response to social stimuli more than non-PTSD subjects.”¹²

These researches are particularly valuable, because they provide quantitative analysis of data from the Afghanistan and Iraq wars and conflicts, which the AAF have been involved with since 2003, hence, making the results relevantly applicable to ‘Albanian veterans’ of these wars.^{13*} Although no clinical research has been conducted in Albania, being that Albanian soldiers have experienced similar combat trauma, implies that (1) they are more at risk of being affected by symptoms of PTSD than average citizens and that (2) they are more at risk of engaging in violent activities in the future. Even though these are general conclusions that can be applied to all combat veterans, analyzing the particular Albanian context will be essential in understanding the full spectrum of causes that might push Albanian soldiers to engage in criminal or extremist behavior.

¹⁰ Seal, K, Bertenthal, D., Miner, C., Sen, S., & Marmar, C., “Bringing the War Back Home: Mental Health Disorders among 103,788 U.S. Veterans Returning from Iraq and Afghanistan Seen at Department of Veterans Affairs Facilities”, *Archives of Internal Medicine*, 107:5, 2007, 476, DOI:[10.1001/archinte.167.5.476](https://doi.org/10.1001/archinte.167.5.476).

¹¹ Orth, Ulrich, & Wieland, E., “Anger, Hostility, and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder in Trauma-Exposed Adults: a Meta-Analysis”, *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 74, 2006, 698–706. DOI:[10.1037/0022-006X.74.4.698](https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-006X.74.4.698).

¹² Jakupcak, M., Conybeare, D., Phelps, L., Hunt, S., Holmes, H. A., Felker, B., et al., “Anger, Hostility, and Aggression among Iraq and Afghanistan War Veterans Reporting PTSD and Subthreshold PTSD”, *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, 20, 2007, 945–954.

¹³ * The term ‘veteran’ in Albania is only reserved to the Veterans of the National Liberation War of 1942-1944, however, for the purposes of this policy brief members of the Albanian Armed Forces which have served combat tours in Afghanistan or Iraq, will be referred to as ‘veterans’.

V. The Case of Albania

The involvement of Albanian soldiers in criminal and terrorist activities is a fairly recent phenomenon. However, since 2011, Albanian soldiers have increasingly been implicated with criminal activities. Table 2 (in Annex A) presents a summary of all the incidents linking veterans and soldiers with extreme violent behavior, such as crime, support for terrorism and even successful suicide attempts. At present, research on the topic is practically inexistent, while the rising numbers of cases of former military members' involvement in criminal activities urges for a serious policy debate and concrete alternatives.

a) How serious is this problem?

It is important to understand that the phenomenon is not a random coincidence. Literature speaks volumes about the link between combat missions and criminal tendencies among soldiers.¹⁴ As Hafemeister and Stockey have found out, "veterans may be especially susceptible to PTSD symptoms that may be linked to violent acts and related criminal behavior."¹⁵ Such phenomenon is also witnessed in the Albanian context. Although at first glance, it appears statistically normal that former soldiers turn into criminals given the amount of professional soldiers that the Army has recruited and trained for the past 8 years (since 2009), comparative data shows that Albanian soldiers have been more prone to violent extremism than their regional counterparts. The fact is that 5-7% of the Albanian foreign fighters in Syria were former members of the AAF and this should, in itself, send a distress signal to the Albanian government authorities. This is one of the highest rates of radicalized individuals within the Armed Forces of any country and for that reason it should be worth investigating further. The table below shows the number of foreign fighters which were part of the military for the Western Balkans countries.

#	Country	FF as former servicemen
1	Albania	5
2	Bosnia	0
3	Kosovo	0
4	Macedonia	0
5	Montenegro	0
6	Serbia	0

Table 1: servicemen who have fought as Foreign Fighters in WB Countries.¹⁶

¹⁴ Thomas Hafemeister L., Stockey, Nicole A., "Last Stand? The Criminal Responsibility of War Veterans Returning from Iraq and Afghanistan with Posttraumatic Stress Disorder," *Indiana Law Journal: Vol. 85: Iss. 1, Article 3*, 2010, pg. 94, available at: <http://www.repository.law.indiana.edu/ilj/vol85/iss1/3>.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 94

¹⁶ *Note: the data was collected from a variety of sources (written documents and experts) which have studied the phenomenon in the region.*

As noted above, the involvement of former military personnel in violent extremist behavior is unprecedented among any of the other 5 Western Balkans countries which arguably face very similar socio-political problems. If radicalization of military veterans were a coincidence, practically all other WB countries should have experienced the phenomenon; yet, so far, we've only seen it present in Albania.

Additionally, criminal tendencies among Albanian military veterans have also increased over time since 2011. According to Kujtim Boriçi, a retired military officer and currently a military journalist, in 2008, out of about 4130 prisoners in the Albanian penitentiary system who were serving sentences for moderate to grave crimes, only 3 were military personnel and in all three cases their crime was 'driving accident resulting in death'.¹⁷ Boriçi also believes that "as military soldiers continue to face socio-economic problems, they will be more inclined to stray from the ethical principles of the military profession."¹⁸

Civilian professionals who have worked as psychologists with Albanian soldiers in the past assert that the military profession, and particularly combat missions, can enable soldiers to engage more in violent activities than regular citizens. Aleksandra Puci, the former head of the psychological services at the MoD, adamantly asserted that many of the former combat veterans "are a contingent at high risk for being recruited by terrorist groups because none of them has scathed without any psychological consequences."¹⁹ Similarly, Albana Telhai, the former head of the Psycho-Social Sector of the Albanian Armed Forces, who has provided professional counseling for various veterans of the AAF, also believes that "not only these events are not a coincidence but there is a great probability for other Albanian soldiers to get implicated in similar criminal activities in the future."²⁰

Hence, the first institutional shortcoming comes from not properly recognizing and assessing the problem. As expected, this approach is not the most effective way to developing applicable solutions. For example, in a recent comment to a local news

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1. For Kosovo, Arife Muji informed the researcher through a correspondence that their research had never identified a case of military service person being a FF. In her research on the re-integration of FF did not encounter any such cases http://www.qkss.org/repository/docs/Reintegration_842325.pdf
 2. For Macedonia Filip Stojkovski also confirmed that their research had never come across members of the uniform services dealing with extremist acts – their report also has no findings on this http://www.analyticamk.org/images/Files/extremism-en-updated-FINAL-web_ceb98.pdf
 3. No Bosnian FF had come from the ranks of the armed forces. This is also indicated in the report "The Lure of the Syrian War: The Foreign Fighters' Bosnian Contingent" <https://goo.gl/adttWg>.
 4. For Serbia, Vladimir Erceg working with the Balkan Center for Security Policy (BCSP) informed that their center had not encountered any cases of former soldiers fighting as FF and no official data indicating the same.
 5. Montenegro's Institute Alternativa, Dina Bajramspahić confirmed that official sources in Montenegro have not identified any former soldiers becoming a FF.

¹⁷ Interview with Kujtim Boriçi, 4 May 2017.

¹⁸ Ibid.,

¹⁹ Interview with Aleksandra Puci, 8 May 2017.

²⁰ Interview with Albana Telhai, 25 April 2017.

agency, the current Minister of Defense stated that "this is a common problem for many militaries" and that "our whole society should stand up and support these men ([former soldiers])."²¹ Although this is true, it is also important that the institution engages in addressing the problem just as much in order to produce more efficient results.

b) *What's the risk?*

The most basic analysis for determining risk levels is through evaluating the impact and likelihood of occurrence. In the case of military soldiers being involved in criminal or extremist activities, there is a high impact and moderate likelihood of occurrence. This finding is also supported by experts in the field, where according to military psychologist Daniel David, "over 40% of the PTSD diagnosed soldiers will engage in criminal or violent activities."²² Needless to say, this risk level can have devastating social and security impacts.

First, there is a *high impact* on society when soldiers are involved in violent activities as they not only betray public trust by becoming delinquents and terrorists, but outcomes are also graver. For example, the fact that veterans of many Western countries, of the Iraq and Afghanistan campaigns, "represent the largest known occupational group in prison,"²³ has caused much discontent among people in those societies and has even caused the justice system to develop unique court procedures to handle these cases.²⁴ The economic and social damage caused through the criminal acts of our veterans at home, have just as negative of an impact as those of the Albanian foreign fighters to Syria. On one hand bank robberies, kidnappings, production of improvised explosives, aiding organized crime and drug trafficking and brutal killings of innocent people hurts Albania's internal security while on the other, having soldiers fight alongside terrorists damages the international image of Albania and threatens its national security. Because of the "closed" nature of the military, any negative publicity can greatly affect public trust in the institution. This goes to show that whenever the military ignores engaging and communicating with the public in cases of uninvited, negative events, the public most likely will interpret it as an acceptance of guilt. According to the director of the National Association of Military Reservists (NAMR), Thoma Konduri, "many military reservists and active members don't feel appreciated for their service – and, unfortunately the actions of some cause a great deal of harm to the institution, the profession of arms and the country."²⁵

²¹ *BalkanWeb*, "Krimet e ish-Komandove/Kodheli: Problem i Gjithë Ushtrive, Jo Vetëm në Shqipëri", 6 March 2017, accessed 24 April 2017 <http://www.lapsi.al/lajme/2017/03/06/komenti-i-mimi-kodhelit-p-r-ish-komandon-q-i-preu-kok-n-fqinjit-sh-rbeu-para-2013#.WRj51uuGPDc>

²² Daniel David, *"Post-traumatic stress disorder and the causal link to crime: A looming national tragedy"* Leavenworth, KS: School of Advanced Military Studies, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 2008.

²³ Verity Wainwright, Sharon McDonnell, Charlotte Lennox, Jenny Shaw & Jane Senior, "Soldier, Civilian, Criminal: Identifying Pathways to Offending of Ex-Armed Forces Personnel in Prison", *Psychology, Crime & Law*, 22:8, 741, 2016, DOI:[10.1080/1068316X.2016.1181175](https://doi.org/10.1080/1068316X.2016.1181175).

²⁴ Judge Michael D. Hawkins, "Coming Home: Accommodating the Special Needs of Military Veterans to the Criminal Justice System", *Ohio State Journal of Criminal Law*, Vol. 7:2, 563-573: 572, 2010, ISSN: 1546-7619.

²⁵ Interview with Thoma Konduri, 20 April 2017.

Soldiers turning criminals and terrorists have an equally high impact on security, and although, other members of the society engage criminal activities, due to difficulties in profiling, they can never represent a whole community or profession as former members of the military do.

Second, *the probability* is moderate because soldiers have greater ease at engaging in violent activities. According to *The Military Psychologist*, soldiers are more likely to engage in criminal activities due to their proficiency in delivering violence.²⁶ In fact, according to Wainwright *et al.*, the "level of violence and aggression which is cultivated during service" in the form of training feeds into the overall objective of "making a soldier" and "programming" people to behave confidently and take higher risks.²⁷ This is why, the common denominator for all the crimes committed by former or active duty Albanian soldiers is the knowledge and skills to operate weapon systems and engage in tactics which facilitate their criminal intentions. Military training can inspire confidence in individuals who wish to engage in delinquent activities by enhancing their sense of invulnerability and inflate their self-belief of success, thanks to their "combat exposure and training in the use of violence."²⁸ Therefore, even if the intent to engage in criminal activities was the same between civilians and military personnel, the likelihood of acting on such intent will be higher among soldiers due to higher levels of confidence in being successful.²⁹ Furthermore, given the Albanian context, because former service members have higher unemployment rates and face a lack of socio-economic support, they are then more prone to risk (i.e. they feel they have nothing to lose).

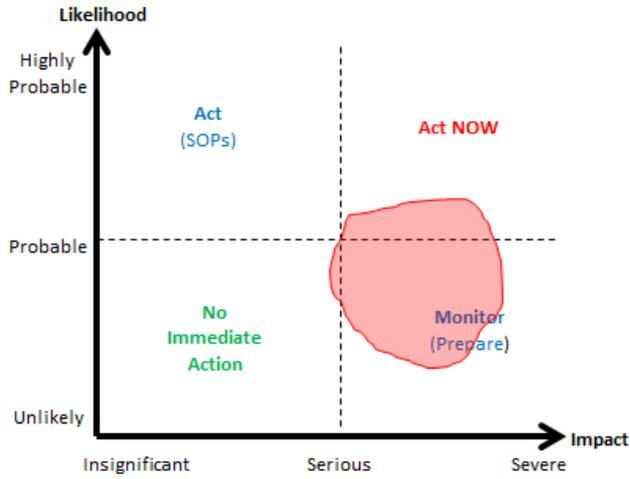
A graphical representation of the risk level associated with the involvement of military soldiers in criminal and terrorist activities would appear as below:

²⁶ Brandt A. Smith, "Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in the criminal justice system: Veterans' Treatment Courts are based on 'drug treatment courts' and follow an agenda of addressing the problems that led to the criminal behavior", *The Military Psychologist*, April 2014, accessed on 15 May 2017, <http://www.apadivisions.org/division-19/publications/newsletters/military/2014/04/ptsd.aspx>

²⁷ Verity Wainwright, et. al., "Soldier, Civilian, Criminal: Identifying Pathways to Offending of Ex-Armed Forces Personnel in Prison," 749.

²⁸ Ibid., 749

²⁹ Coincidentally, in 1998 the Turkish general in charge of training the first Albanian Special Forces warned that if "[our] elite soldiers are not treated well financially and morally, they could turn into criminals outside of the Army." *Koha Jonë*, "The Foreign General's Prophecy: 'If You Don't Treat Them Well, They Will Turn into Criminals'", 6 March, 2017, accessed 2 April 2017, <http://www.kohajone.com/2017/03/06/profecia-e-gjeneralit-te-huaj-per-komandot-shqiptare-nese-nuk-i-mbani-do-kthehen-ne-kriminele/>.



As per the current developments on this issue and the basic risk analysis established, the Albanian MoD should both monitor and act upon this phenomenon. Albania's MoD should consider the criminal implications of their armed forces as a serious threat to stability and order within the country because ultimately, a capable criminal is always more dangerous than an incompetent one.

VI. Catalyzing Factors

All the research, interviews and consultation with experts point at two major categories of causes for the persistent involvement of soldiers in criminal activities: (1) *economic instability* and (2) *lack of psycho-social support*. As these categories are very broad, the following section will discuss some of the particular causes which influence soldiers' tendencies towards criminal and extremist behavior – undoubtedly, some of these elements overlap between the two major categories.

First, *institutional negligence* has created a vacuum in the implementation of policies for the support of service members. Over time this has generated a sense of abandonment within members of the armed forces and a feeling of being neglected by the institution that they have served for a very long time. The structured interviews conducted for the purposes of this research, also indicated that soldiers themselves feel the institutions is not providing enough support. In fact, 80% of the interviewed people placed "lack of institutional support" as the second main reason (after "low wages") which might push soldiers towards criminality.³⁰ Most soldiers do not benefit from the basic support which is supposed to be provided by their status.³¹ This includes their career services, family support, retirement support and the preliminary pension which has now been reduced to "crumbs".³² This inability of the institution to meet its basic legal requirements towards the service members is perhaps the one of the most realistic factors of discontent among military personnel. Not surprisingly, even former members of the psychological services had noticed this shortcoming when stating that "military members in Albania are not treated as their counterparts in other NATO countries."³³ However, shortcomings don't always arise from the institution. In fact there is also a visible lack of determination from military associations to 'fight' for their rights and very little organization to bring unity of purpose and deliver their message across various audiences. Although, this is largely a case of inability rather than absence of good will.

Second, and perhaps more important, is *low income, non-proportional unemployment and difficulties of re-integrating into the society*. Most former members of the AAF, as in many other places, find themselves unemployed for a very long time because their skill set rarely matches requirements in the 'civilian world'. Furthermore, they rarely envision or plan for a life outside of the military so when this happens, they are almost always unprepared to face the realities. When you add *low*

³⁰ Structured interview with over 32 members of the AAF coming from elite units which best represent the population of soldiers that have been involved in criminal activities in the past.

³¹ In an interview with Thoma Konduri, he attested that the most recent law on the status of reservists, Law Nr. 10367, date 23.12.2010, is not being implemented and soldiers' rights are not being met.

³² Neritan Gjergo, interview with Thoma Konduri, "Discrimination for Military Personnel: Seeking well-Deserved Pensions", 6 June 2015, accessed, 3 April 2017, <https://www.pressreader.com/albania/shekulli/20150606/281874412020058/TextView>.

³³ Interview, Aleksandra Puci

income, to the mix, the challenges of handling the transition become more difficult. According to the survey conducted, 86% of soldiers believe that the primary reason which would push Albanian soldiers to commit violent or criminal activities is "lack of economic stability"; and when asked "what do you think the institution can do to help the military personnel?" everyone which chose to answer this question put "higher wages" as one of the reasons.³⁴ This situation is not unique to Albanian soldiers. In fact research has shown that for many soldiers "leaving the armed forces is more than leaving a place of employment; for many it is a loss of family and a complete way of life."³⁵ Because of this close connection to the "military family", and inability to quickly transition into civilian life, reservists are a group at high social risk. Their transition can be very difficult partly because they apply their military mindset to every new job. This is precisely why re-integration programs are essential to be applied in order for former military personnel to adapt more easily with life after the military. According to Jamie Grove, reintegration programs do not only benefit the soldiers but also their families in learning how to support and manage the life after the military.³⁶ Experts believe that the stronger community re-integration is, the easier it will be for veterans and former members of the military to adjust with civilian lifestyle.³⁷ On the contrary, when re-integration practices are almost absent, often times this might lead to devastating consequences such as depression and suicide as "most studies identify clear linkages between PTSD, suicide, and military service"³⁸ – unfortunately, such was also the case of a former Special Forces operative. Difficulties of integration hence result from the inability to "deal with the loss of the *armed forces family*, as it potentially creates a sense of dependency on the armed forces."³⁹ It is exactly this lack of integration and ability to adjust to new changes, Wainwright argues, that "creates easier pathways to offending [criminal offense]."⁴⁰

The third reason involves a *distancing from professional military ethics*.⁴¹ Political leadership has come to influence many aspects of military leadership. A survey

³⁴ Structured interview with member of the Albanian Armed Forces.

³⁵ Verity Wainwright, Sharon McDonnell, Charlotte Lennox, Jenny Shaw & Jane Senior, "Soldier, Civilian, Criminal: Identifying Pathways to Offending of Ex-Armed Forces Personnel in Prison", *Psychology, Crime & Law*, 22:8, 747, 2016, DOI: [10.1080/1068316X.2016.1181175](https://doi.org/10.1080/1068316X.2016.1181175).

³⁶ Jaime Grove, "Military Reintegration and Resiliency: An Examination of Programs and Civilian Counselor Training", Spring 2015, *Educational Specialist*. Paper 3., accessed 22 April 2017, <http://commons.lib.jmu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1006&context=edspec201019>.

Furthermore, according to Konduri, high rates of unemployment, particularly among former soldiers and NCOs are quite prevalent in Albania due to lack of alternative job-market qualifications.

³⁷ Veliska J. Thomas PhD, LCSW & Stan L. Bowie PhD, MSW, "Sense of Community: Is it a Protective Factor for Military Veterans?", *Journal of Social Service Research*, 42:3, 313-314, 2016, DOI: [10.1080/01488376.2015.1109575](https://doi.org/10.1080/01488376.2015.1109575).

³⁸ Steven G. Koven, "PTSD and Suicides Among Veterans—Recent Findings", *Public Integrity*, 0: 1, 2016, DOI: [10.1080/10999922.2016.1248881](https://doi.org/10.1080/10999922.2016.1248881).

³⁹ Verity Wainwright, Sharon McDonnell, Charlotte Lennox, Jenny Shaw & Jane Senior, "Soldier, Civilian, Criminal: Identifying Pathways to Offending of Ex-Armed Forces Personnel in Prison", *Psychology, Crime & Law*, 22:8, 747, 2016, DOI: [10.1080/1068316X.2016.1181175](https://doi.org/10.1080/1068316X.2016.1181175).

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 747

⁴¹ According to retired Army Colonel Sulejman Abazi, who has done extensive research on the AAF psychological state before and after the 1997 crisis, as the role of the Army and their esteem declined over time after 1997, so did

conducted by IDM in 2009 about the perception of Armed Forces Personnel on civil military relations, concluded that overall political leadership oversteps its boundaries while infringing on competencies which belong to military personnel.⁴² More specifically, the survey concluded that 60% believe civilian leadership does not have the necessary capabilities to execute their responsibilities, and that 76% agree that civilian leadership interferes with matters related to military issues.⁴³ Military personnel increasingly had lesser say on matters of the military hence this very soon became reflected in the mission and values of the institutions. This change of roles and responsibilities went as far as soldiers wanting to join the military with the sole purpose of going to a mission for earning more money. The newly adopted 'purpose' of seeing the institution as a simple means of earning money while abandoning traditional professional values causes many soldiers to lose the moral compass and professional integrity which is built upon values of selflessness and duty towards the country. Given the newly found focus on material benefits, the risks of a soldier engaging in criminal activities for the sole purpose of financial benefits, becomes even higher.

The fourth reason involves a *lack of effective psycho-social support and access to other support services* for former soldiers and particularly former veterans. Under the strict guidance of NATO, in 2012, the Albanian Military opened the "Psycho-Social Sector", tasked to provide psychological evaluation for the Albanian Armed Forces and in particular for those heading or coming back from the war theater. On 01 October 2012, the Minister of Defense issues Guidance Nr. 10 on the "Development of personnel policies involving the psycho-social service and equal opportunities" in the AAF, delineating the purpose, responsibilities and significance of the Psycho-Social Section.⁴⁴ 8 months into the functioning of this sector, on May 2013, the Albanian Chief of Staff released Order Nr. 3970, date 05.04.2013, "On the psychological evaluation procedures of the Armed Forces Personnel", detailing a list of tasks to be followed by various units within the AAF in support of the initiative to provide psychological support to soldiers.⁴⁵ The importance of this document is that for the first time it regulated the activity of the Psychosocial Sector by formalizing it and establishing standard operating procedures for future work.

the morale of the troops. Over time the financial support, training aid and even logistical support declined and the military has "lost respect and appreciation in society." Therefore, low morale has made military servicemen focus on the financial benefits of the profession, which themselves being amongst the lowest within the Albanian administration don't provide much motivation to maintain an unwavering respect for the uniform, professional norms and even the law. In his own words "there is little dignity in poverty."

⁴² Gjergji Vurmo, "Report: Armed Forces Perceptions on Civil Military Relations", in *Democratic Control and Civil Military Relations – still an Unfinished Business*, Institute For Democracy and Mediation, December 2009, 125-134, accessed 28 April 2017, http://idmalbania.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/KONTROLLI-DEMOKRATIK-DHE-MARR%C3%8BDH%C3%8BNIET-CIVILO-USHTARAKE_dhjetor-2009.pdf.

⁴³ Ibid., 131, 133

⁴⁴ Arben Imami, Minister of Defense, "Development of Personnel Policies Involving the Psycho-Social Service and Equal Opportunities", *Guidance Nr. 10*, 01, October 2012, pg. 1-3.

⁴⁵ Xhemal Gjunksi, Albanian Chief of Staff, "On the Psychological Evaluation Procedures of the Armed Forces Personnel", *Order Nr. 3970*, date 05.04.2013, pg. 1-3.

Experts' Findings

Several specialists in the sector were questioned to further understand about the importance of the psycho-social service in reducing the risk of violent behavior from service members and the responses were almost always congruent. The interviewed specialists were Albana Telhai, Aleksandra Puci and a Captain in the AAF serving as a psychologist and who prefers to remain anonymous since the interview was not officially approved. Some of their conclusions were:

- Between 20-25% of the personnel clearly exhibits symptoms of psychological stress, anxiety, depression or PTSD and they intensify with each combat mission
- The psychological service needs to be strengthened further as it is highly helpful to soldiers.
- Military personnel, although skeptical due to fear of stigmatization, largely felt that the service helped them in their routine tasks

There is a good chance that more military personnel will be involved in violent or criminal activities. There is a good chance that violent behavior is already present in the form of domestic violence (although this is hard to measure in general in the Albanian society).

In October 2014, this sector was shut down. Currently the AAF has scattered psychologists into key units around the AAF however due to lack of coordination and planning they operate very independently and without updated guidance. Furthermore, of the entire group of psychologist serving in the main combat units, only two possess the required academic or work background to sustain such responsibility.⁴⁶ Normally they are simple officers who are tasked additionally to perform the duties of the unit psychologist. They operate under minimum training received through 2-3 rounds of weekly sessions while the "Psychological Sector" was operational.⁴⁷ Furthermore, these psychologists are normally performing this job 'on the side' as their main responsibilities are usually to serve under their units' headquarters.

In October 2015, the Directorate of Education and Social Support of Military Personnel conducted a joint study with OSCE and the Austrian Army with the purpose of evaluating the current state of the psychological service of the Albanian Armed Forces. The report identified various flaws with the current system such as: "inadequate number of qualified professionals", "lack of logistical support for the service", "lack of consistent training on topics regarding mental health", "lack of

⁴⁶ Interview with Albana Telhai – former head of the Psycho-Social Section of the AAF, at the Ministry of Defense. Also confirmed through a report prepared by the Directorate of Education and Social Support of Military Personnel, "Psycho-social services and psychological support in the AAF: Analysis of current flaws", prepared by Aleksandra Puci, October 2015, pg. 3.

⁴⁷ Aleksandra Puci, "Psycho-Social Services and Psychological Support in the AAF: Analysis of Current Flaws", Directorate of Education and Social Support of Military Personnel, October 2015, pg. 3, 4.

psychological support in combat missions", "lack of adequate psychological evaluation upon return from combat missions", "PTSD symptoms in the AAF are often followed by punitive measures such as early retirement", "lack of data to support future research" and "lack of methods to conduct proper evaluations."⁴⁸ On this very same project, the interested parties conducted a survey to measure the perception of military personnel about the psychological service, where 78% of the surveyed personnel believe that the service was "significant" or "very significant" and 89% believed that the service would make the Armed Forces more professional as a whole.⁴⁹ This report is important as it deliberated on the various flaws of the psychological service currently being provided to soldiers as well as it emphasized the need for improving this service. When asked about the outcome of the report, Aleksandra Puci stated in her interview that the MoD did not see and interest in pursuing this project.⁵⁰

Today, the psycho-social service is functioning as a formality. Our interviewed soldiers indicated that the current psycho-social service is not effective at doing its job. Some 72% stated that they have never filled in the psychological self-assessment tool, while 75% declared that they have never received a proper counseling or evaluation session, all the while 84% believe that the service can be of high benefit to military personnel.⁵¹

Social support is certainly an aspect that encompasses a myriad of other elements such as family support services, career services, recreational activities, financial support mechanisms, medical and other civil services support. The MoD has not lived up to its legal expectations in providing these support services, which in turn weakens the level of trust soldiers have in the institution.⁵² Nonetheless, for most military active duty and reserve personnel (86% of them) the number 1 concern remains their economic wellbeing.⁵³ *Experts, and military personnel themselves agree that in the Albanian context the primary reason which could lead to criminal, violent or extremist behavior, is 'lack of economic security'.* Poor economic conditions do not guarantee for a dignifying livelihood for soldiers and their families, which leads to domestic problems and accumulated stress; over time soldiers lose interest in their work and seek other forms of employment.⁵⁴ This factor also explains why over 250 officers have presented requests to the Minister of Defense to leave the AAF due to economic hardships and related inability to support their families.⁵⁵ Ms. Telhai explains this complex phenomenon as follows:

⁴⁸ Ibid., 14

⁴⁹ Ibid., 10

⁵⁰ Interview with Aleksandra Puci

⁵¹ Structured interview with military personnel.

⁵² Interview with Thoma Konduri

⁵³ Structured interview with military personnel.

⁵⁴ Correspondence with A. Telhai, A. Puci and AAF Captain

⁵⁵ Interview with Thoma Konduri

"when soldiers are faced with a combination of economic problems, inability to find alternate sources of income and a demanding professional environment, they develop a sense of hopelessness which keeps them 'stuck' in a constant state of apathy. This makes individuals ineffective at both their work and their personal life as it stops their drive for self-development. Due to the fact that they have been deprived for a very long time, should a crises occur in their life, they will take great risks as they realize they have little to lose. Such risky behaviors can certainly include criminal activities. Certainly, if economic conditions improved, this would alleviate much of the issues arising from the private life, however, if we can't change that we must do whatever necessary to mitigate impact of professionally induced stress(which in the military is very high) through the right psycho-social support."⁵⁶

Hence, it is clear how lack of psycho-social support can lead to violent and criminal behavior but when this is coupled with economic insecurity they present a strong link between 'combat veterans' and 'engagement in criminal activities'.

⁵⁶ Correspondence with Albana Telhai.

VII. What Do Service Members Think?⁵⁷

Although much of this research is found upon academic research and expert interviews, it is just as important to have an understanding of the perceptions that soldiers have regarding the involvement of military personnel in criminal or extremist activities. A summary of the main finding concerning what service members believe to be the primary causes of this phenomenon is therefore presented below. The structured interview guaranteed a fair distribution of the 32 participants where 13 were from the 2nd Infantry Battalion, 11 from the Special Forces Regiment and 8 from the Commando Regiment. Furthermore, the field study involved 9 officers, 15 NCOs and 8 soldiers, of which 15 are on active duty, 10 are reservists and 7 preferred to not declare. 73% of the participants (25) had partaken at least once in missions abroad and of them, 80% had been deployed to 2 or more missions (both combat and peace-operations). Some of the most relevant findings from this survey are:

⁵⁷ This entire section will present the findings resulting from the structured interview with Albanian service-members.

Main findings of the structured interview conducted with military personnel.

1. Although 84.5% see psycho-social services as very important in helping reduce criminal tendencies, 75% of them declare never having had a psychological evaluation
2. The top 3 factors that might push military personnel to engage in criminal activities are:
 - a. Lack of financial stability – 86% placed this as the number 1 reason
 - b. Lack of institutional support – 81% placed this as the second most important reason
 - c. Stress and psychological problems – 43% selected this as the third most important factor
3. 94% believe that the military profession has psychological effects on soldiers and 81% think these problems are more evident in combat veterans. 78% have witnessed behavioural changes in military personnel returning from missions abroad and 68% believe that this is occurs *typically* and at times *often*.
4. Soldiers identified that on average the number of soldiers exhibiting signs of post deployment stress is between 7 and 10. Coincidentally this is also the same number that is reported in many scientific researches.
5. *53% of the surveyed personnel believe that the number of soldiers actually involved with criminal or extremist activity is actually higher.*
6. 75% agree that more military personnel is in danger of being radicalized and once again the two main ‘push factors’ identified are
 - a. Low income – 78% chose this as the primary reason
 - b. Lack of institutional support – 52% chose this as the secondary reason
7. *72% have knowledge of Albanian military personnel (active or reserve) who have been involved with criminal or extremist activities.* 91% have knowledge of service members who suffer from post-deployment behavioural disorder.

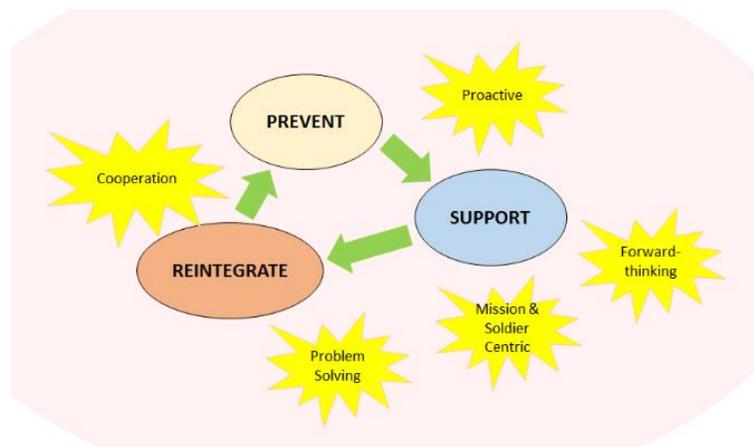
VIII. What Can Be Done?

The first step to preventing further criminal transgressions of members of the AAF is for the MoD to assume more responsibility over the possible causes of the phenomenon. Furthermore, the MoD needs to develop strategy which will dedicate specific resources to the mental health and socio-economic support of soldiers. The strategy needs to focus on three basic principles:

- A. *Being proactive, not reactive* – this implies engaging in policies which recognize the importance of including former service members in long term development plans. Understanding the needs of the service members and developing practices to support those needs. This principle requires strategic foresight, cooperation of the MoD with other significant actors.
- B. *Have a problem solving not punitive mentality* – as of right now the AAF personnel has few incentives to engage in reporting ‘improper’ activities of their fellow comrades due to the fact that the institution deals with internal problems

in a punitive way. When soldiers are suspected of having PTSD, they are reported and usually that affects their career. Furthermore, the authoritarian structure of the institution makes it almost impossible for soldiers, noncommissioned officers and officers to organize amongst each other and propose changes. This is the reason why often times, great solutions which could stem from the bottom-up remain un-noticed.⁵⁸

- C. Prevent-support-reintegrate -- this continuous cycle would allow for the military to maintain a constant engagement on issues concerning military personnel and reservists. It is however just as important to enact the proper capacities and resources to support this strategy through all its stages. This strategy requires a parallel implementation of various strategies to meet the diverse challenges ahead.



Some of the specific actions which can improve the lives of military service members and consequently reduce their predisposition towards violent and criminal activities could be:

- 1) *Increased wages* – this provides soldiers with a dignifying standard of living for them and their families. Economic stability alleviates personal stress, allows soldiers to fully commit to their mission and prevents tendencies to acquire additional financial incomes which often times can be acquired through illegal activities.
- 2) *Social inclusion and integration and social support programs* – these programs need to be of quality and ensure that service is provided in a timely manner. Most NATO countries have specialized offices which serve to inform and assist service members with bureaucratic procedures but also services which might

⁵⁸ Judge Michael D. Hawkins, “Coming Home: Accommodating the Special Needs of Military Veterans to the Criminal Justice System”, *Ohio State Journal of Criminal Law*, Vol 7:2, 563-573, 563, 2010, ISSN: 1546-7619

According to Judge Michael Daly Hawkins, who has dealt extensively with the involvement of military veterans in criminal cases, “Focusing on non-violent offenses and relying on a treatment rather than punishment model, early reports suggest the efforts are working to address the profound stress many veterans have experienced and the difficult adjustment to civilian life they face when returning home.”

be helpful in the future, such as *career services*. These programs are quite inefficient in the Albanian military right now. Furthermore, social inclusion and *integration programs* should involve anything from career counseling and preparing reservist to better compete in the job market. This is essential because of any other profession, military personnel finds themselves unproportionately unemployed. This is primarily due to the fact that very few other jobs might require the skill-sets of former military members. In reality, when people leave the military they will have spent most of their 20s in that profession and have no experience to compete in other jobs. These programs should also extend as far as to communicate to possible employers the hidden potential behind hiring a former soldier. Briefly, other social support services would include, increasing cooperation with local government to assist re-integration into the society, providing better health services to soldiers and their families, offering financial help through soft government loans, helping with educational courses, etc..

- 3) *Constant psychological evaluation and support* – it is a fact that the military profession can induce higher levels of stress due to the violent nature of the profession. This is more evident in veterans of war. Constant psychological support for soldiers is not simply an obligation to honor and take care of soldiers for their sacrifice and commitment, but also a service for the country. This service should be professional and maintained as an essential structure of support for the Armed Forces. As soldier's stress levels decrease, so will the risk of them being implicated in violent actions and crimes. *Pre-evaluation*, is also a very important factor which can determine the level of psychological health of soldiers. Psychology professors McNally and Shin, concluded that there is a direct correlation between a veteran's intelligence quotient, and the severity of his PTSD (the study was conducted on male subjects). They concluded that "cognitive variables may affect the ability to cope with trauma, thereby affecting the levels of PTSD."⁵⁹ Ultimately, soldiers with poor mental health are a liability in the battlefield and a social problem at home.
- 4) *Ensuring that the status of military reservists is respected* – This should not be left only to the MoD but the Albanian Armed Forces and the military associations which can speak on their behalf. The AAF should find ways to cooperate with their civilian counterparts to ensure a strong and efficient Armed Force, capable of responding to all expected challenges.
- 5) *Strengthening and expanding veteran's network* – the MoD in cooperation with military associations in Albania should attempt to organize a network of veterans and ensure that it remains connected. This is a good method of guaranteeing constant engagement of former military members. It offers them

⁵⁹ Richard J. McNally and Lisa M. Shin, "Association of Intelligence with Severity of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Symptoms in Vietnam Combat Veterans", *The American Journal of Psychiatry*: 152:6, June 1995, 936-938, 936.

an opportunity to network, expand their career opportunities and re-immense themselves into a community which shares a common identity and enforces similar code of ethics. Furthermore, this network should stay connected with the institution itself to share information and updates on the recent developments and the changing needs of the military. Establishing cooperation between generations is essential in harnessing experience while looking forward to a stable and secure future. Strengthening the veteran's network also means *expanding* it by recognizing soldiers who have fought in the Iraq and Afghanistan theaters of war as modern veterans of the Nation. This will not only boost morale but it will serve as a testament to the enduring legacy of courage and patriotism of Albanian men and women who have risked their lives in support of Albania's national interest. Leaving such legacy can also be important to national security through preserving tradition and national pride.

- 6) *Improving the role of military associations* – First, it is very important that these organizations on their own maintain continuous contact with the military forces to provide a communication channel between military leadership and the troops and ensure that the needs and requirements of soldiers or reservists are met accordingly. Second, these organizations should utilize outside channels to inform and raise awareness of the issues concerning military personnel. Third, military associations should also serve as a bridge between military personnel and support institutions such as the ombudsman, audit institutions, courts and other relevant institutions which can assist service members and their families in coping with the difficulties of their profession.
- 7) *Developing normative elements re-establishing the military code of ethics*– The MoD and the AAF should enhance their engagements with troops towards better understanding their role within the institution and the state. Doing so enforces the value system and the bond of service members with the society, making it more difficult for them to want to engage in illegal and criminal activities.
- 8) *Research and Monitoring* – anything that is measured and monitored, improves! Anything that is left unobserved, can lead to unexpected consequences. This is why, in the spirit of being *proactive*, the MoD and the AAF should engage in research within their units to better understand the root causes of certain issues and to make informed decisions on how to react. R&D could be conducted internally or in cooperation with other external actors (civil society, other government agencies or consulting companies) depending on the level of expertise required or purpose of research. In any case, the most important thing is to maximize the utility of the R&D and use the feedback to improve on previous work. Taking care of soldiers is a never-ending process, and the mechanisms to support that process should also be consistent and permanent.

Annex A, Table 2

#	Name	Unit	Crime	Date of Event/ Arrest	Charged	Mission	Profile	Other
1	Kujtim Çeliku	Commando	Robs jewelry shop	17-Sep-11		3 times Iraq, 2 times Afghanistan	From Mullet, Tirana	Ammunition, explosives and unlicensed weapons found in residence. Ready to go on 6 th mission.
2	Aldo Morina	FS	Kills mother's lover	1-Jan-13	6-Jun-13			
3	Confidentially omitted		Stealing weapons		3-May-13		Supply NCO	Penal court does not publish name.
4	Maringlen Bramati	FS	Commits suicide	Oct-13				Psychological trauma from combat missions.
5	Diamant Rasha (Ebu Amar)	Commando	Joins ISIS – gets killed	21-Mar-14				Killed in Syria, Dec. 2013
6	Erjon Aliaj	Commando	Joins ISIS – gets killed	21-Mar-14				Killed in Syria
7	Artur Balla (Omer)	Commando	Joins ISIS	21-Mar-14				Returned - 5 February 2014
8	Leonard Përlika	Commando	Joins ISIS	21-Mar-14				Returned
9	Pëllumb Daçi	Support Co.	Sold C4 in the black market	19-May-14			Major	Group sold over 98kg of C4 and other explosive materials.
10	Ilir Dhimo	Support Co.		19-May-14			NCO (SFC)	
11	Artur Çelo	Support Co.		19-May-14			Soldier	
12	Emild Taku	Support Co.		19-May-14			Soldier	
13	Fran Kola		Produced remote controlled mines	15-Jul-14				Involved in the murder of businessman Xhemal Çela, execution of Baki Xhabafti and the wounding of local government official Fredo Berberi
14	Kleo Gjinkola		Produced remote controlled mines	15-Jul-14				
15	Alban Donaj		Produced remote controlled mines	15-Jul-14				
16	Ndriçim Balla		Killed M.H. and wounds E.F. in "Bllok"	9-Sep-13	17-Sep-14			35 years in prison. Motive: 150USD owned by the victim.
17	Sokol Feka	Air Force	Transporting drugs from Morocco to Spain	29 Jan 2015			Major in the AF. Pilot	Dies during the operation due to helicopter collapse
18	Romin Davidhi	Navy	Drug trafficking		15-Jun-16		28 years old, from Durres	
19	Confidentially omitted		Stealing ammunition		09-Jun-16			Penal court does not publish name.
20	Confidentially omitted	Unit 100	Stealing weapons, ammunition, falsifying documents		26-Jun-16		Unit 100	Penal court does not publish name.
21	Medat Hasani	Commando and SF	Arrested for possible terrorist attack on Albania-Israel match		8-Nov-16	6 months in Iraq		Left on 28.7.2013 for Syria and returned on Dec. 2013. Radicalized after leaving the Army. Was to supply the remotely detonated bombs to be used at the stadium
22	Ditjon Memlika	Commando	Rob 3.2 million USD (at Qafe Kasha)	9-Feb-17		1 year Afghanistan	Dismissed disciplinary for reasons	

23	Naim Avdulaj	Infantry					Left the Army	Gambler. Arrested in Italy in 2012. for drug-dealing
24	Alban Voda	Commando	Kills neighbor - cuts off head	5-Mar-17		Kabul 2010-2011; Herat: Jan-Jul 2012	Heavy psychological state	
25	Drilon Shqau	Logistics	Drug trafficking - Tirana	29-Apr-17		N/A		Squad commander in Peze Helmez

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- Interview with Albana Telhai, former Head of the Psycho-Social Section of the AAF, at the Ministry of Defense
- Interview with Thoma Konduri, head of the National Association of Military Reservists
- Interview with Aleksandra Puci, former head of the psycho-social services at the MoD
- Interview with Kujtim Boriçi, former Army officer, currently a journalist who has covered extensively the activity of the AAF
- Interview with Sulejman Abazi, former Army officer, author of the book *The Psycho-Social Space within the Armed Forces*
- Interview with Army Captain (anonymous) – currently a psychologist in the AAF, name omitted because interview was conducted without official consent.

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