



#### BASIC INFO:

Disinformation Alerts – Serbian Media Monitoring is a monthly report on the news related to disinformation and misinformation targeting Kosovo, published by media in Serbia

#### SUPPORTED BY:



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#### DISCLAIMER:

The views presented in this publication are solely those of the Kosovar Institute for Policy Research and Development (KIPRED).

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# KOSOVO DISINFORMATION ALERTS

**SERBIAN MEDIA**  
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## INTRODUCTION

**Kosovo Disinformation Alerts: Serbian Media Monitoring** aim to counter disinformation that targets Kosovo, by monitoring, on a monthly basis, preselected media outlets originating in Serbia. The preselected media are Tanjug, Informer, Novosti, Kurir, B92, Politika, and Naša Borba, which are known for producing news with disinformation content that is not limited only to Kosovo.

The monitoring of these media shows that during the month of July, 2020, the above mentioned preselected media outlets originating in Serbia have published a total of 493 news related to Kosovo, where Tanjug has published 48, Beta 53, Informer 45, Novosti 62, Kurir 21, B92 220, Politika 38, and Naša Borba 6 articles related to Kosovo

A careful review of these articles has shown that the news published during this period by Beta, Kurir, and Naša Borba, did not contain any serious disinformation content. On the other hand, the other preselected media outlets have had relatively high number of news and articles with disinformation content on Kosovo. Against this backdrop, KIPRED was focused on the deconstruction of the most blatant disinformation provided by the above listed Serbian media, which will be conducted in the following section.

The aim of the disinformation generated in this monitoring period by the preselected Serbian media in relation to Kosovo was focused on the denial of Serbian war crimes and of the victims and missing persons in Kosovo, on the disparagement of the NATO intervention and of the Ambassador William Walker, diparagement of the treatment of war crimes in Kosovo by domestic and international justice, and on the disparagement of the Kosovo Security Force and of Germany, under the pretension that they have made a secret deal for buying of 'Leopard II' tanks.

## THE DECONSTRUCTION OF THE MOST BLATANT DETECTED DISINFORMATION

### Disinformation Alert 1

**Headline:** *Italijanska novinarka: Kosovo je crna rupa [The Italian journalist: Kosovo is a black hole]*, **B92**, July 29<sup>th</sup> 2020.<sup>1</sup>

The article discusses the interview conducted by Kosova Online with the Italian journalist and writer, Marija Lina Veka,<sup>2</sup> which talks on the situation in Kosovo, and calls it as “a black hole.” Among other things, in this interview Veka disinformers staggeringly on two issues:

Firstly, she states that Kosovo is an illegal state, where the rule of law is absent, in which the crimes committed by KLA and NATO are not recognized, and where there are no investigations on the disappearances of about 2,000 Serbs.

Secondly, Veka claims that from 300 up to 500 Serbs are victims of removal of vital organs, which were intended for international trafficking, and that all the proofs for kidnappings, killings, and organ trafficking have disappeared.<sup>3</sup>

### **The Deconstruction of the Disinformation: Facts and Figures**

#### **a) “The crimes of NATO, and the disappearance of 2,000 Serbs in Kosovo”**

According to the Fund for Humanitarian Law with headquarters in Belgrade, and its Office in Prishtina, during the 1998–1999 war in Kosovo, there were more than 13,500 people who were killed or have disappeared, 10,794 of which were Albanians, 2,197 were Serbs, and the others

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<sup>1</sup> Italijanska novinarka: Kosovo je crna rupa [The Italian journalist: Kosovo is a black hole]:

[https://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2020&mm=07&dd=29&nav\\_category=640&nav\\_id=1712277](https://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2020&mm=07&dd=29&nav_category=640&nav_id=1712277)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

were persons of other non-majority communities.<sup>4</sup> For all these war crimes in Kosovo there were both, investigations, and punishments, from international and domestic courts,<sup>5</sup> and most of the incriminated individuals were from the Albanian community. Meanwhile, regarding the issue “of the non-recognition of the crimes committed by NATO,” this is altogether false, given that NATO has not committed any crime in former-Yugoslavia, either during the bombing campaign, or during its presence in Kosovo as a peace-keeping mission. On the other hand, during the bombing campaign of NATO in Kosovo, the Serbian Army and Police have used civilians as “human shield,” by putting people in military positions in which they were located themselves,<sup>6</sup> and as a consequence of this there were civilians killed by NATO,<sup>7</sup> but who were not targets of its attacks. Regarding the statement that “there is no investigation on 2,000 missing Serbian citizens,”<sup>8</sup> the Governmental Commission of the Republic of Kosovo for Missing Persons, according to the law, does not treat any from the missing persons based on ethnicity, gender, national origin, etc.<sup>9</sup> However, it should be stressed that in a response that this Commission has provided to KIPRED Institute, it has stated that there are still 1,640 persons missing in Kosovo, “70 percent of which are Albanians, and 30 percent belong to other communities, such as Serbs, Turks, Roma, etc.” According to this, we see that majority of the missing persons are Albanians, rather than Serbs, and, thus, the statement that “there are no investigations on 2,000 missing Serbian citizens”<sup>10</sup> is a pure disinformation.

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<sup>4</sup> Radio Evropa e Lirë [Radio Free Europe], Dokumentimi i krimeve të luftës, misioni i papërmushur në Kosovë [The documentation of the war crimes, an unaccomplished mission in Kosovo], <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/dokumentimi-i-krimeve-te-luftes-mision-i-papermushur-ne-kosove/29865017.html>

<sup>5</sup> Radio Evropa e Lirë [Radio Free Europe], Të dënuar për krime lufte në Kosovë, 34 shqiptarë dhe 4 serbë [Punished for war crimes in Kosovo, 34 Albanians and 4 Serbs], <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/te-denuarit-per-krime-lufte/29563538.html>

<sup>6</sup> Amnesty International: NATO/Federal Republic of Yugoslavia “collateral Damage” or Unlawful Killings?, Human shields, page 8, <https://amnesty.no/natofederal-republic-yugoslaviacollateral-damage-or-unlawful-killings>

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Italijanska novinarka: Kosovo je crna rupa:

[https://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2020&mm=07&dd=29&nav\\_category=640&nav\\_id=1712277](https://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2020&mm=07&dd=29&nav_category=640&nav_id=1712277)

<sup>9</sup> Response sent to KIPRED Institute by the Governmental Commission of the Republic of Kosovo on Missing Persons; Law Nr. 03/L 023 on Missing Persons, Article 3.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

**b) “300 up to 500 Serbs are victims of the removal of vital organs”**

The charges for human organs trafficking during the period 1998–1999 were mentioned in several reports after the end of war in Kosovo,<sup>11</sup> whereas on December 12<sup>th</sup> 2010, Dick Marty had presented the Report on human organs trafficking before the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.<sup>12</sup> The Report claimed “inhuman treatment of people and killings of imprisoned persons in Kosovo with the goal of removal and illicit trafficking of human organs by the members of the Kosovo Liberation Army.”<sup>13</sup> However, the statement of the Chief Prosecutor of the Special Investigative Task Force, Clint Williamson dismisses completely that there are hundreds of persons who were kidnaped with the goal of the removal and trafficking of organs. On the date July 29<sup>th</sup> 2014, the Chief Prosecutor Clint Williamson had stated that:

*“The statements given by some people implying that hundreds of peoples were killed with the goal of organ trafficking are completely unsupported by the data that we have, and that Dick Marty has had. If there was a single person who was subjected to such a horrific practise, and we believe that a small number of them were subjected, this is a horrific tragedy, and the fact that it happened in a limited scale does not reduce the ferocity of such a crime. But there also is no need to overstate the figures and to create undeserved pains and anxieties for the families that still don’t know for the fate of their beloved ones, by pushing them to imagine this additional dimension of horror.”<sup>14</sup>*

Based on this statement of the Chief Prosecutor Williamson, we understand the truth that there is not even a single fact that supports the claim that hundreds of people were subjected to “removal and illicit trafficking of human organs in Kosovo by the members of the Kosovo Liberation Army,” and that the suspicions are for only a small number of such cases.

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<sup>11</sup> Balkaninsight.com, Kosovo Organ-Trafficking: How the Claims were Exposed,

<https://balkaninsight.com/2015/09/04/kosovo-organ-trafficking-how-the-claims-were-exposed-09-04-2015-1/>

<sup>12</sup> Parliamentary Assembly, Council of Europe: Inhuman treatment of people and illicit trafficking in human organs in Kosovo ,

<http://www.assembly.coe.int/CommitteeDocs/2010/ajdoc462010prov.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Statement of the Chief Prosecutor of the Special Investigative Task Force, 29 July 2014, [file:///C:/Users/PC/Desktop/Statement\\_of\\_the\\_Chief\\_Prosecutor\\_of\\_the\\_SITF\\_EN.pdf](file:///C:/Users/PC/Desktop/Statement_of_the_Chief_Prosecutor_of_the_SITF_EN.pdf)

## **Disinformation Alert 2**

**Headline:** *Mediji: Angela dala zeleno svetlo, Nemci naoružavaju Kosovo [Media: Angela gave the green light, the Germans are arming Kosovo]* **B92**, July 22<sup>d</sup> 2020.<sup>15</sup>

In the month of July 2020, almost all the media in Serbia, such as B92, Novosti, Informer, Tanjug and Politika, have reported on the statement of Marko Đurić, the Director of the Office on Kosovo in the Government of Serbia, that Kosovo authorities have negotiated purchase of armament with German Intelligence,<sup>16</sup> including the purchase of German tanks 'Leopard II'.<sup>17</sup> Đurić also stated that by selling armament to Kosovo, Germany is violating its Constitution and laws. During his interview he made offensive statements against Kosovo Albanians, by saying that "it is better to send books to Albanians in Kosovo, given that with tanks they will never get into the UN."<sup>18</sup>

### **The Deconstruction of the Disinformation: Facts and Figures**

KIPRED Institute send an official request to the Ministry of Defense of Kosovo regarding the statement of Marko Đurić published in the Serbian media that Kosovo is negotiating the purchase of 'Leopard II' tanks from Germany. In the response provided by the Ministry of Defense of Kosovo, Colonel Sefer Isufi, Deputy Director of the Office for Public Relations, provided a detailed

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<sup>15</sup> B92.net, Mediji: Angela dala zeleno svetlo, Nemci naoružavaju Kosovo [Media: Angela gave green light, Germans are arming Kosovo,

[https://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2020&mm=07&dd=22&nav\\_category=640&nav\\_id=1709605](https://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2020&mm=07&dd=22&nav_category=640&nav_id=1709605)

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Politika.rs, Немачка преговара о продаји оружја косовским Албанцима [Germany negotiating the selling of armament to Kosovo Albanians], <http://www.politika.rs/scc/clanak/459010/Nemacka-pregovara-o-prodaji-oruzja-kosovskim-Albancima>

<sup>18</sup> Novosti.rs, MARKO ĐURIĆ PORUČIO NATO ČLANICAMA: Bolje Albancima na KiM pošaljite knjige, tenkovima nikada neće ući u UN [MARKO ĐURIĆ GIVES ADVICE TO NATO MEMBERS: It is better to send books to Albanians in KiM {Kosovo and Metohija}, with tanks they will never get into the UN], <https://www.novosti.rs/vesti/politika/905065/marko-djuric-porucio-nato-clanicama-bolje-albancima-kim-posaljite-knjige-tenkovima-nikada-nece-uci>

report, in which he arguments that all these are “fake” and “disinformation news” by the Serbian and Russian media,<sup>19</sup> by stressing the following facts:

- a) From its establishment, the Kosovo Security Force has an agreement with NATO, in the framework of which within the Ministry of Defense and KSF functions the Advisory and Liaison Team of NATO (NALT)<sup>20</sup> which performs the following tasks:
- Advisory – including those in the fields of capacity building, training, governance, doctrine, logistics, international law, human rights, and management;
  - Assisting – including the best practices in accordance with international standards on such issues as strategies of the central offices, policies, planning processes and the mechanisms of the internal control, which ensure transparency and responsibility;
  - Liaison and coordination of the Assistance Programs of NATO.

On this issue everything is transparent, and there is no secret agreement whatsoever on purchase of armament by the Ministry of Defense of Kosovo, given that all of its and KSF’s activities are done in full coordination with the Advisory and Liaison Team of NATO, in which Germany itself is a member.

- b) During the visit of the Prime Minister of Kosovo, Mr. Avdullah Hoti, to the Ministry of Defense and KSF, he stated: “Today I am here to refute whatever news that were published in international media, regarding the supply with armament of KSF.”<sup>21</sup> Also, during this visit, the Kosovo Security Force presented to Mr. Hoti the HMMWV vehicles, which were bought from the United States of America.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Response through electronic mail from the Ministry of Defense of Kosovo, send by Colonel Sefer Isufi, Deputy Director of the Office for Public Relations.

<sup>20</sup> Nato.int: Nato Advisory and Liaison Team (NALT), [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_144933.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_144933.htm)

<sup>21</sup> The Statement of the Prime Minister of Kosovo, Mr. Avdullah Hoti in the Cantonment Adem Jashari of the KSF, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=6&v=4H-wFf5M6QI&feature=emb\\_title](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=6&v=4H-wFf5M6QI&feature=emb_title)

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

Meanwhile, during this meeting with the Prime Minister of Kosovo, the Minister of Defense, Mr. Anton Çuni stated that “the special war that is being waged by the Russian media, that KSF is allegedly being armed furtively from Germany, in the value of 170 million Euros, all these things, according to Minister Çuni, are being made to destabilize the peace in the Balkans, and to create excuse for further armament of Serbia, as well as with the tendency to compromise our good and transparent cooperation with the state of Germany.”<sup>23</sup>

- c) The annual Budget of the Ministry of Defense for the year 2020 is 69,275,842 €, for the year 2021 it is 69,693,026 €, and for 2022 it is 74,369,087.<sup>24</sup> With these budgetary projections, it is impossible for the Ministry of Defense to buy expensive equipment and military means, and particularly to buy equipment whose value is measured in hundreds of millions of Euros.

### **Disinformation Alert 3**

**Headline:** ĐURIĆ: Voker treba da odgovara zajedno sa liderima OVK! [ĐURIĆ: Walker should be hold responsible together with the leaders of the KLA], **Informer**, July 10<sup>th</sup> 2020.<sup>25</sup>

The article stresses the statement of the Director of the Office for Kosovo in the Government of Serbia, Marko Đurić, who claims that William Walker is responsible for provoking the war in Kosovo and for “the aggression” of NATO against former Yugoslavia. Đurić describes William Walker as a criminal and “an integral part of the so-called KLA, and one from the ideological inspirators and creators of the war in Kosovo.”

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> LAW ON THE BUDGET APPROPRIATIONS OF THE REPUBLIC OF KOSOVO FOR YEAR 2020, <https://mf.rks-gov.net/desk/inc/media/EA0446D5-97E0-4540-A9CB-73521FD245A9.pdf>

<sup>25</sup> ĐURIĆ: Voker treba da odgovara zajedno sa liderima OVK! [ĐURIĆ: Walker should be hold responsible together with the leaders of the KLA!], <https://informer.rs/vesti/politika/532853/djuric-voker-treba-odgovara-zajedno-liderima-ovk>.



## The Deconstruction of the Disinformation: Facts and Figures

While trying to deny the Serbian crimes during the war in Kosovo, Marko Đurić accuses former US Ambassador and the Head of the former Kosovo Verification Mission,<sup>26</sup> William Walker, as responsible for provoking the war in Kosovo and for aggression against former Yugoslavia, by intimating on the massacre of Reçak and NATO intervention in Kosovo.

As far as the role of William Walker during the war in Kosovo is concerned, it should be stressed that the members of the Verification Mission in Kosovo did have the task to oversee the cease-fire between the Serbian forces and KLA, and they had the possibility only to follow the events and to report on them, without any possibility to prevent anything, given that they had neither the necessary means, nor the power, nor the mandate.<sup>27</sup> Regarding the claim related to “provoking” of the war by Ambassador Walker, it should be stressed that the massacre of Reçak, as well as the failure of the Rambouillet Accords were the turning points in the war in Kosovo, which eventually culminated with the intervention of NATO. On January 15th, 1999, in the village of Reçak in the municipality of Shtime, the Serbian police and military forces killed 45 Albanian civilians,<sup>28</sup> and the Head of the Verification Mission of OSCE for Kosovo, Ambassador William Walker have described this act of the Serbian forces as a “crime against humanity.”<sup>29</sup> These findings were confirmed by the Finnish forensic team sent by the European Union for investigating the killings in Reçak. The leader of the Finnish Investigative Team, Dr. Helen Ranta, stated that they came to the conclusion that the victims were unarmed civilians, and she described this act as “crime against humanity.”<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> OSCE Kosovo Verification Mission / OSCE Task Force for Kosovo (closed), <https://www.osce.org/kvm-closed>.

<sup>27</sup> Joschka Fischer, Vitet kuq-gjelbër [Red-Green Years], Botimet Koha, 2008, pg.118.

<sup>28</sup> MASAKRA QË NDRYSHOI HISTORINË E KOSOVËS [THE MASSACRE THAT CHANGED THE HISTORY OF KOSOVO], <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/masakra-qe-ndryshoi-historine-e-kosoves/30376954.html>.

<sup>29</sup> For more, see, <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/kosovo/interviews/walker.html>

<sup>30</sup> Massacre a ‘crime against humanity’ in Kosovo, <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/massacre-a-crime-against-humanity-in-kosovo-1.164160>

## **Disinformation Alert 4**

**Headline:** *SKANDAL U GNJILANU: Konzulat Crne Gore smešten u krugu fabrike za duvan, počasni konzul saradnik Ramuša Hardinaja [SCANDAL IN GJILAN: The Consulate of Montenegro put in the surroundings of the tobacco factory, the Consul of Honor collaborator of Ramush Haradinaj], Novosti, July 24<sup>th</sup> 2020.*<sup>31</sup>

The article claims that Montenegro has caused a scandal and has violated the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations by appointing the deputy of the Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo, Gazmend Abrashi, as a Consul of Honor to Kosovo. According to the article, a politician cannot be a Consul of Honor.

### **The Deconstruction of the Disinformation: Facts and Figures**

This article is a full disinformation, and here we are not dealing with any diplomatic scandal, given that the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations<sup>32</sup> does not foresee any prohibitions for appointing the politicians as consuls of honor. The issue of the consuls of honor is regulated in the third chapter of the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations. These provisions of the convention do not foresee that those who exercise political functions are prohibited from being appointed as consuls of honor. On the contrary, these provisions foresee that any state can decide freely if it wants to appoint consuls of honor.<sup>33</sup> It should also be stressed that it is strange that article is focusing on this issue, given that the opening of this consulate has happened more than a year ago. On May of the year 2019, Montenegro took the decision to open a Consulate of

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<sup>31</sup> SKANDAL U GNJILANU: Konzulat Crne Gore smešten u krugu fabrike za duvan, počasni konzul saradnik Ramuša Hardinaja [SCANDAL IN GJILAN: Consulate of Montenegro put in the surroundings of the tobacco factory, the Consul of Honor a collaborator of Ramush Haradinaj], <https://www.novosti.rs/vesti/politika/904496/skandal-gnjilanu-konzulat-crne-gore-smesten-krugu-fabrike-duvan-pocasni-konzul-saradnik-ramusa-hardinaja>.

<sup>32</sup> Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, [https://legal.un.org/ilc/texts/instruments/english/conventions/9\\_2\\_1963.pdf](https://legal.un.org/ilc/texts/instruments/english/conventions/9_2_1963.pdf).

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, Article 68.

Honor in Gjiilan,<sup>34</sup> and its opening took place on July 2d, 2019, as well as the appointment of Gazmend Abrashi as a Consul of Honor.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Mali i Zi hap konsullatë në Gjiilan [Montenegro opens consulate in Gjiilan], <https://gazetametro.net/mali-i-zi-hap-konsullate-ne-gjiilan/>.

<sup>35</sup> Mali i Zi me konsullatë nderi në Gjiilan [Montenegro with Consulate of Honor in Gjiilan], <https://2lonline.com/mali-i-zi-me-konsullate-nderi-ne-gjiilan/>.