

Ex-Security Chief Blows Whistle on UN's Kosovo Mission

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(Correction: Changes reference from OSCE to KFOR in 21st paragraph)

(CNSNews.com) - Following five years of United Nations control and billions of dollars of international aid, Kosovo is a lawless region "owned" by the Albanian mafia, characterized by continuing ethnic cleansing and subject to increasing infiltration by al Qaeda-linked Muslim jihadists, according to a whistleblower interviewed by Cybercast News Service.

The U.N.'s repeated failure to act on received intelligence has allowed illegal paramilitary groups to flourish and engage in terrorist attacks aimed at destabilizing regional governments in the Balkans, said Thomas Gambill, a former security chief with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), self-described as the world's largest regional security agency.

Gambill was responsible for overseeing the eastern region of Gjlane in Kosovo from 1999 until 2004 under the authority of the U.N. His criticism comes as the United Nations prepares to launch final status talks on the troubled province of Kosovo, which has been a U.N. protectorate since North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) forces bombed Yugoslavia between March and May of 1999 to compel the Serb-dominated government of Slobodan Milosovic to withdraw its forces from Kosovo.

The U.S. mission in Kosovo alone cost \$5.2 billion between June 1999 and the end of 2001, according to a report from the U.S. Government Accountability Office.

NATO bombing leads to Muslim retaliation

The NATO bombings were also launched in response to reports of large-scale ethnic cleansing of Kosovar Albanians by the Serbs. But as soon as the bombing campaign ended, ferocious, retaliatory ethnic cleansing allegedly took place with Albanians, who are predominantly Muslim, targeting Christian Serbs. The violence was witnessed and documented by the U.N. and OSCE.

Gambill shared hundreds of pages of U.N. and OSCE documents with Cybercast News Service, showing how the Serbs and other minorities were systematically and successfully targeted for removal from Kosovo.

Following the NATO bombing of Kosovo, American troops under NATO command were stationed in neighboring Macedonia and Albania while then-President Bill Clinton decided on the size of the U.S. contingent to be deployed in Kosovo. When U.S. troops entered the province in June 1999, the alleged retaliatory ethnic cleansing was already underway.

Incidents of sexual violence, torture, arson, murder, kidnapping, and verbal threats were allegedly widespread as part of an organized and successful campaign conducted "right under the U.N.'s nose," said Gambill.

Minorities targeted by ethnic Albanian extremists for expulsion or death included Serbs, Roma, Muslim Slavs,

Turks and Croats.

Reports filed by the OSCE indicate that the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), which had been trained and supported by the Clinton administration, was predominantly responsible for the ethnic cleansing. In April 1999, congressional Republicans also promoted legislation seeking U.S. military aid for the KLA, causing Michael Radu of the Foreign Policy Institute to [warn](#) of the consequences of such a move.

Other armed extremist groups also participated in the ethnic cleansing, said Gambill.

The overall goal of the groups was the creation of an ethnically pure state that included Albania, Kosovo and parts of Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia "They will push for more. That is the plan. It's called Greater Albania," said Gambill.

OSCE documents reveal that elderly Serbs who were unable to flee were threatened and women were thrown down staircases. Others were tortured, beaten and murdered. Some elderly Serbs fled to monasteries for protection, but the monasteries were later attacked as well, including as recently as March of 2004, according to the OSCE documents

Entire villages emptied in the wake of large-scale arson and looting. OSCE documents describe "massive population movements" by displaced minorities after so many of their homes were set on fire, that one region of Kosovo resembled "a war zone."

An OSCE report notes that in one particular month of 1999 ethnic-related crimes dipped, but the report adds that it is unclear if that was due to the success of NATO's KFOR (Kosovo Force) or simply because there were relatively few Serbs left.

After six months of NATO presence, the violence aimed at the Serbs became less frequent, though grenade attacks, drive-by shootings and abductions continued as weekly occurrences for the next five years, according to Gambill. "Even as of a couple of weeks ago, it hasn't stopped," he added.

The perpetrators of ethnic violence were emboldened by a lack of functioning local police or a judiciary system, Gambill said. Even now, the "good cops" are threatened by former KLA members, who are also on the police forces. "One female cop, she was a real Serpico," recalls Gambill. "She wouldn't give up an investigation after being threatened. She was killed soon after being warned."

Minorities are still being denied health care by Albanian medical professionals who quickly dominated the health care profession following the NATO bombing, Gambill said. He recounted an incident in which a Serb doctor was taken behind a building and shot in the back of the head. "Sometimes they had to take wounded Kosovar Serbs all the way to Serbia for medical aid," said Gambill.

'Don't Rock the Boat'

Gambill told Cybercast News Service that he was most frustrated by what he saw as apathy on the part of the U.N. Mission in Kosovo and OSCE, despite what he described as lower-level officials who "worked really hard and cared about the mission.

"There was a don't-rock-the-boat atmosphere," Gambill explained. "Many people deployed to the region simply wanted to make their hefty pay and have a good time vacationing in Greece. They didn't want any 'problems' on their watch."

Aggressive patrols were discouraged, Gambill said, for fear that any ensuing firefights would give the appearance

that KFOR forces did not have control of the area.

"It was all P.C. (politically correct). People were afraid to say anything," said Gambill, adding that those who spoke out on serious issues were subjected to transfers or other reprisals. "No one seems to want to listen or make waves. They said 'I can't do anything to change the system, so why speak out?'"

The result of such an attitude, Gambill said, is that "every time there is an attack against a Serb, it's always described as an 'isolated case' -- an event swept under the rug, so to speak."

Gambill said his warnings and reports on grave security threats were often met with a condescending attitude and even laughter. During a briefing given at the end of 2000 to OSCE delegates from Vienna, Austria, Gambill identified illegal [paramilitary groups](#) operating in the Balkans in violation of U.N. Security Council resolution 1244.

Albanian mafia flourishes

At the same briefing, Gambill said he tried to explain the regional mafia structure, however, U.S. and Russian delegates in the audience complained about the content of Gambill's speech. As a result, he said, OSCE headquarters in Pristina sent a message to Gambill's regional superiors with the message, "Shut Tom up." "You couldn't get up in front of meetings and say, 'We've lost control of [Kosovo], the mafia controls it,'" said Gambill. "But they do. They run the damn place."

Gambill cited OSCE data that showed 42 mafia leaders had moved into Kosovo in the wake of the NATO bombing in order to set up criminal organizations. They continued to thrive despite efforts to establish mature law enforcement operations in the province, he said.

"Drug smuggling, counterfeiting, weapons, human trafficking were all booming when I was there," said Gambill. He also alleged that high-level mafia leaders are in senior political positions.

"Good cops," who want to target the corruption are "under threat," said Gambill, adding that the Albanian mafia maintains ties with Russian, Serbian, Croatian and Italian mafia organizations to further their common agendas.

Gambill also warned his U.N. superiors that the newly formed paramilitary group, the Albanian National Army, was "highly dangerous and skilled" and operating in Kosovo as well as northwestern Macedonia. But those warnings, he said, were also met with disbelief.

Within months, the Albanian National Army was taking credit for terrorist attacks, prompting the U.N. to acknowledge the group's existence.

Now Kosovo has entered what Gambill calls "The Fifth Phase," characterized by attacks against the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) itself. A September warning from UNMIK to staff members warns, "Before you turn on your vehicle, inspect it all around, to see if anything is unusual or suspicious." The warning followed the blowing up of an UNMIK vehicle.

"UNMIK Out!" reads the graffiti seen on many buildings in Kosovo.

A field officer currently working with the U.N. Mission in the Kosovo area spoke with Cybercast News Service on condition of anonymity. After noting that the explosives used by al Qaeda terrorists in the March 2004 Madrid bombing attacks had come from the Balkans, he stated: "I sit here watching special patrol groups surveying and doing nothing. How many more people will die; whilst terrorists rest and recuperate here in the not so moderate Muslim regions of the Balkans theatre?"

"The cat and mouse game is coming to an end," the field officer noted. "Kosovo is saturated with extremists so NATO [may] pull out before it all blows up in their faces. War on Terror! [It's] more like support [of] terror!"

"My biggest concern has always been the incursion of radical Islam into the area," said Gambill. "They're making preparations in Macedonia for terrorist attacks against internationals if Kosovo is not granted independence."

If the United Nations recommends against independence, Gambill said, it will spur the Saudis to increase their involvement in the region. "They've got the money, they've got the power. They'll remind Kosovars that they are their true friends. And they'll help the extremists fight and prepare terrorist attacks against internationals and even NATO troops stationed there," Gambill told Cybercast News Service.