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Partnership for Peace and New Dimensions of Albania's Security Posture

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Commentary

The following article by Major General Adem Copani, a Defense Advisor to President Sali Berisha of Albania, describes his country's perceptions of NATO and delineates a future role within the alliance structure for Albanian forces. He outlines the many cooperative agreements presently in existence between NATO and Albania as well as the many military exercises which Albania has sponsored. As such, this important essay makes a compelling case for Albania's eventual full membership and participation in NATO. It also serves as an important indicator for future U.S. bilateral relations with this pivotal Balkan nation.

For a multitude of reasons, Albania desires specific security guarantees and will likely look increasingly toward the United States to fulfill these requirements.* Subsequent to President Berisha's election in 1992, for example, the U.S. has donated over \$100 million to Albania in the form of combat vehicles, medical gear, and communications equipment. Albania now expects to purchase an initial shipment of sophisticated military hardware and is lobbying to host U.S. bases in the region.

Specifically, Albania desires U.S. help in training, organization, and base construction. The Defense Minister, Saset Zhulali, is currently developing plans to downsize and professionalize his military - which includes an army, navy, air force, air defense force, interior ministry units, and border guards. Ground forces will reduce from 25 divisions to 5 and will consolidate from almost 2,000 small installations into a few new large bases. Zhulali has stated that he realizes others are also seeking U.S. assistance, but "no one is in such need as Albania is."

Readers should note, however, that this article represents a distinctly Albanian point of view. While some U.S. officials and academics (as well as Albanian interest groups) argue that ignoring Albania will cause instability, over-extensive U.S. involvement in the country could also lead to embroiling American and NATO forces in regional disputes in Kosovo, Macedonia,

and elsewhere. Each of these represent potential military quagmires. Nonetheless, the insights and perceptions offered by the author add significant depth to our understanding of the region.

*[Note: A companion piece to this essay entitled, "Albania And Its Security Policy," by Brigadier General Ali Koceku (Commandant of the Albanian Defense Academy) was published by the Foreign Military Studies Office in August 1995. It enumerates the various threats which Albania postulates to its borders. This document remains available on the FMSO Internet Homepage at <http://leav-www.army.mil/fmso/>]

A New Era

For decades after its break with the former Soviet Union in early 1960, Albania found itself in a strategic vacuum as it sought to provide its own security and defense without allies. Today, Albania is trying hard to fill this vacuum by seeking ties with existing European defense formations and security systems. The process leading up to today's Partnership for Peace cooperation between NATO and Albania can be traced back to a time, soon after the demise of communism during early 1992, when it became the first Eastern European state to officially apply for NATO membership.

In fact, for Albania, the last few years have been a period of emergence from the oblivion, profound isolation, and solitude which it had experienced during its years of dictatorship. After going through an upheaval so complete that it can be compared to a powerful political, social, and economic earthquake it began to establish close ties of friendship and cooperation with its traditional Western allies. During their centuries-long history, the Albanians (one of the oldest nations contributing to the development of European civilization) have never been so close to the countries of Western Europe and the United States. Likewise, the latter have never had a closer relationship to Albania than now. This is a period of great solidarity with the countries of the European Union, United States, and other countries friendly to Albania.

The first important event marking the beginning of institutionalized cooperation between NATO and Albania was the latter's admission to the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC) in June 1992. From that time, a great number of Albanian parliamentarians, journalists, politicians, and military men have visited NATO Headquarters in Brussels and SHAPE in Mons. Participation in many information seminars and conferences enhanced Albanian public knowledge and understanding of the alliance. During late 1992, the first official NATO delegation came to Albania on a fact-finding mission. Subsequently, in December 1992, Albanian President Berisha visited NATO Headquarters. The President delivered a speech at the North Atlantic Council and conversed with the distinguished Secretary-General Manfred Wornier.

This visit led to many high level NATO delegations coming to Albania and culminated with the historic visit of NATO's Secretary-General to Albania in March 1993. "Albania belongs to Europe," Wornier solemnly declared before the Albanian Parliament. "This nation is famous for its pride and virtues, for its energy and talent. I strongly believe in the values of your people and

have come here to show my readiness to help you." NATO's technical expertise soon benefitted Albania. The country was visited successively by the Chairman of the Military Committee, Field Marshal Sir Richard Vincent, Supreme Allied Commander Europe, General George A. Joulwan, and both of their deputies. Con-currently, NATO Headquarters became a place of pilgrimage for a number of corresponding Albanian delegations and missions.

Towards Partnership for Peace

The launching of the Partnership for Peace (PFP) initiative at the January 1994 Brussels Summit proved to be a major policy step by NATO. It was directed at increasing confidence and cooperative efforts to reinforce security and offered Albania not only a true possibility of strengthening its relations with NATO (in accordance with its own specific interests and capabilities) but also served as a key element of the country's integration process into the alliance. President Berisha, who made his second visit to NATO to sign the PFP Framework Document, explicitly indicated the importance Albania attaches to its membership. The Framework Document was then approved unanimously by the Albanian Parliament.

Having responded to the summit invitation and formally subscribing to the PFP Framework Document, Albania's Minister of Defense, Safet Zhulali, submitted a Presentation Document to NATO Headquarters. It addressed the various political and military aspects of the partnership and included the steps that have been and will be taken to promote openness in defense planning and budgetary processes as well as measures taken to ensure the democratic control of armed forces. Furthermore, the document delineated the kind of cooperative activities which Albania hoped to pursue as well as the military forces and assets that it could make available for PFP activities. Short-term possibilities for cooperation and longer-term planning factors that affect Albania's future involvement (such as changes in the structure of the armed forces and the establishment of special peacekeeping units) were also addressed. To put it succinctly, this document provided an important basis for developing individual cooperation programs under PFP.

The development of the Individual Partnership Program (IPP) between NATO and Albania marked the third step in the establishment of the partnership. IPP built upon past programs and documents and set out the overall concept, objectives, and modalities of IPP. Under this framework, the program included a range of PFP activities specific to Albania and covered a variety of areas such as the following: democratic control of armed forces; defense planning and budgeting; education and training; exercises/ operations (general, humanitarian, peacekeeping, search and rescue); logistics; defense structures; defense policy strategy; standardization/interoperability; arms control; air defense; air traffic management; C3I; civil emergency preparedness; coordination of PFP activities and crisis management; conferences/workshops; and visits and other opportunities for dialogue.

For Albania the full potential of PFP is based in large part on the realization of the Defense Planning and Review Process (PARP) in which the country has chosen to participate. PARP became an essential part of the overall PFP framework wherein NATO working groups come to Albania to give worthwhile assistance to their Albanian counterparts. It was intended primarily as both a means to identify the forces and capabilities that Albania plans to make available for

PFP activities and to enhance, over time, its interoperability with allied forces in the now well-established areas of PFP cooperation: peacekeeping; humanitarian operations; search and rescue missions; training and exercises.

Albania agreed to specific goals for improving the interoperability of its PFP-designated units. In addition, PARP was intended as a mechanism for more general and regular exchanges of information and increased openness among allies of Albania on overall defense and financial plans. The Survey of Overall PFP Interoperability which Albania provided served as a good basis for the work to develop the draft Planning and Review Assessment and the draft Interoperability Objectives. It reflected Albania's policies, plans, and aspirations regarding its commitments toward NATO, thus providing a good basis for multilateral consideration at 16+1 discussions in the Political-Military Steering Committee.

Remarkable progress has been made in implementing PFP since its inception. Under PFP, activities and contacts have increased significantly. To date, Albania has established a liaison office at NATO Headquarters in Brussels headed by the former Chief of Defense to facilitate its participation in NACC/PFP meetings and activities. Another feature of the PFP is the establishment of an Albanian Partnership Coordination Cell in Mons, Belgium. This organization, headed by a graduate of the US Command and General Staff College, carries out, under the authority of the NATO Council, the military coordination and planning necessary to implement bilateral programs. Opportunities for political and defense consultations continue to increase through regular meetings in the NACC, Political Committee, Military Committee, and other NATO Headquarters bodies, including twice a year sessions at the Chief of Defense level.

Security Implications

By signing the PFP Framework Document and by scrupulous preparation of the Presentation Document, the Republic of Albania has dramatically confirmed its interest in close cooperation with the North Atlantic Alliance. It does not intend to be merely a passive bystander but rather an active participant. Albania states its belief that security, integrity, and the protection of its democratic achievements and national interests can best be guaranteed through cooperation and integration with European security organizations. Albania, therefore, is seeking closer cooperation with NATO and its member countries in the framework of PFP with the final objective being NATO membership. The steps which Albania is taking to achieve the political objectives of the Partnership and the assets that it is utilizing for Partnership activities speak for themselves and will help attain desired objectives.

Viewed from an Albanian perspective, PFP is not simply an initiative to bring Eastern European armies more in line with those of NATO or merely a program to coordinate activities. It is, first of all, an ambitious initiative intended to enhance stability and security -- globally, in Europe, and regionally in the Balkans and Mediterranean. In effect, PFP increasingly serves as a new and appropriate institution through which Albania is attempting to deepen and intensify its ties with the alliance, primarily in the security sphere.

Albania strongly believes that the PFP concept has a real chance of becoming an important factor in strengthening security, especially in the Balkan region. Intensification of political dialogue,

accompanied by engagement in joint activities such as peacekeeping and humanitarian and search and rescue operations, will lead inevitably to an increasingly more peaceful situation in the troubled Balkans. Albania plays an important role, both for its own benefit and for that of the region as a whole, by working to maintain stable and sustainable relations with its neighbors. It finds in PFP the possibility of consultation with NATO both on the 16+1 basis (the 16 NATO allies plus Albania) and bilaterally in Tirana. Albania can do this in cases when it perceives a direct threat to its territorial integrity, political independence and security, or when NATO itself wishes to discuss mutual interests. In the meantime, Albania continues to develop its democratic institutions and free market economy, without which it cannot achieve the stability necessary to fulfill a role in the region, and prepare for eventual membership in European security institutions.

Indeed, the attainment of these objectives contributes to the security and stability of the region in practical ways. Focusing on PFP not only requires Albania to inventory its accomplishments but also serves to clarify the aims of its security policy. Cooperation between the alliance and Albania helps to guarantee the democratic character of current changes in the country and may serve as a foundation for future regional security structures under NATO aegis. Perhaps, this process can lead to a Balkan system of cooperation that would be capable of solving regional problems and could, in the future, become the main guarantor of Albania's sovereignty and independence.

In the Albanian context, PFP is gaining a wider and more political dimension by relating to the promotion of and commitment to democratic principles. This process increases stability and diminishes threats to Albania. It also enhances peace in the region. The late Secretary-General Manfred Wornat was correct when he explicitly noted some years ago that "the participation of Albania in the security and stability of southeastern Europe and the Balkans is essential -- something that the Alliance wishes to encourage."

In fact, NATO and Albania are increasingly likely to find themselves side-by-side in responding to and implementing UN mandates in the Balkan crisis. The need for more coherent preparation in peacekeeping missions has become more urgent as a result of the increased risk and greater demands on military forces conducting such operations. Today, Albania is involved more heavily in Western international military activities to find a reasonable solution for the Balkan crisis. The Albanian government fully supported the UN embargo against former Yugoslavia in spite of great losses to its feeble economy. In this respect, the Albanian navy cooperated closely with NATO and WEU ships which conducted operation "Sharp Guard" in the Adriatic, and Albanian naval officers have been routinely invited for familiarization visits on board US, British, and Italian ships. Moreover, the Albanian government offered its sea and air bases to NATO to help enforce the UN sanctions and operations against former Yugoslavia.

To help the UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR) fulfill its mission on the ground in the former Yugoslavia, the Albanian government agreed to allow the North Atlantic alliance to use airfields and port facilities in Albania for planned joint information gathering activities in support of operations "Safe Haven" and "Deny Flight" over Bosnia. During 1994, the United States deployed 500-mile range "Gnat 750" remotely piloted aircraft from Albanian territory for surveillance over Bosnia. Also, Albania readied a northern air base for unmanned US "Predator" reconnaissance vehicles to monitor Bosnian territory. The planes possess sufficient range to cover all of

former Yugoslavia, fly slow at low altitudes to spot troops and heavy weapons, and avoid radar detection through "stealth" technology. This mission marked the first operational role for "Predator" and the most significant US operational deployment in Albania. The lack of hesitation by Albania to proceed with this operation, despite the economic and security risks, was an important factor in what can be summed up as the most precious asset the Alliance can hold -- reliability.

Albania's recent admission to the Council of Europe and its efforts to seek association with the European Union constitute major steps toward integration. Also, its role as an active participant in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) provides a major contribution to the efforts of this organization in the region. From the beginning, Albania has been at the leading edge in applying for PFP, participating in and hosting more exercises than any other PFP partner, and supporting the Partnership democratically across its entire political spectrum. However, the Albanian government is aware that NATO membership is a much more complicated and longer- term process, and Albania should undeniably meet the high standards required for democratic systems of government and free market economic development. Hopefully, it is well on the road to building these institutions. As it continues to develop a democratic society, the day will soon come when Albania will be welcomed as a reliable choice for NATO membership.

New Civil Military Relations

Albania is completing the transition to full democratic control of its armed forces. This process is based on the models common in the developed democracies with the Ministry of Defense and Defense Staff corresponding closely to their Western counterparts. The Chief of Defense is subordinated both to a civilian Minister of Defense and a civilian President who serves in the capacity of Commander-in-Chief and is elected by the Parliament. In turn, Parliament carries out its control of the armed forces through approval of the budget and by drafting and controlling legislation pertaining to the area of defense. The Albanian armed forces remain apolitical and the military prohibits its members from participating in political activity.

In order to effectively place democratic civilian control over the military, the education of civilian leaders is indispensable. Consequently, parallel to propagating the Atlanticist principles of democracy and bridging the gulf between the military and society that existed during the previous regime, efforts are being made to establish the necessary education system. It will be available to both the military and civilians and will focus on security and defense policy.

Despite the shortage of resources and lack of experience, a non-governmental Institute for International and Strategic Studies was founded last year in Tirana. Many foreign academics, military, and politicians, including the President of the Republic, Sali Berisha, participated in its first inaugural international conference. The participants debated the problems concerning the evolution of European and Atlantic institutions and the need for a new integration strategy towards Eastern European countries. Albania organized the conference in cooperation with the Instituto Affrari Internazionali di Roma, the Foreign Policy Institute of Ankara, and the Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy of Athens. It was sponsored by the NATO Office of

Information and Press, which will again sponsor another international workshop late this year to discuss Defense Policy on the Threshold of the 21st Century.

Fortuitously, on April 4, 1995, the commemoration day of NATO's founding, the Albanian Defense College was established in Tirana. President Berisha and high officials from NATO countries and the George Marshall Center were present. This college represents Albania's highest form of political-military training in security and defense policies and is open to civilian and military personnel who hold or might hold high responsible state positions for security and defense matters. The first student body, drawn from the Foreign Ministry, Ministry of Defense, Government, Parliament, political parties, and media consisted of 15 civilians and 9 military men. More than half of the lecturers came from western colleges and universities. At the end of the course's term, the whole group of students was invited for a week-long working visit to the George Marshall Center.

Recently, the Albanian Atlantic Association (AAA) was created in Albania. A nonpartisan, non-governmental center addressing the advancement of Albania's interests among NATO countries, AAA is dedicated to the education of different segments of the Albanian nation in the ideals for which NATO stands. Additionally, it promotes the maintenance of peace and defense of freedom through political solidarity and adequate military defense to repel all possible forms of aggression. AAA includes political figures of various parties, military servicemen, parliamentarians, businessmen, journalists, and academics and serves as a forum for discussion. It provides a platform for distinguished guests from NATO countries and Albania to lecture on challenges and opportunities, illuminate choices, and foster informed public debate about Albanian security policy and the relations between NATO and Albania. Late this year, AAA will host its first international conference in Tirana, gathering together more than a dozen representatives from Atlantic organizations.

Military relations between Albania and other countries have largely developed with a strong preference towards NATO members. To date, there are twelve defense memoranda and cooperation agreements between Albania and NATO states. These include the United States, Great Britain, Turkey, Greece, Austria, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, and others. Military contacts have also been established with the Netherlands, Belgium, Denmark and WEU. Albania has hosted more than 50 high level military delegations from NATO, WEU, the United States, France, Great Britain, Turkey, Greece, and Italy, whereas approximately 1500 Albanian military personnel visited headquarters and installations in various NATO countries. Additionally, more than 250 groups of military specialists from NATO, the United States, Germany, Turkey, Austria, France, and Israel have been hosted by Albanian military units and establishments.

In this context, the increasing contacts with NATO and its member countries make it possible for a considerable number of Albanian military personnel to attend military schooling in these countries. The United States, Turkey, and Germany have invited the largest numbers of students.

Albania has also restructured its military education to meet Western standards. The Defense Academy, consisting of the Defense College, Command and Staff College, and a Center of Strategic Studies, as well as an NCO Academy now resembles its US counterpart system. The Military Academy, which commissions new officers, is being reorganized with German curricula

and experience. Part of its teaching staff received special training in Germany, and German military instructors came to Albania to share their experience. To facilitate contacts, English language courses are offered in all military schools and staffs. According to the statistics of the MOD Department of Personnel, more than two-thirds of the officer corps now speaks a foreign language, mostly English, but also German, Italian, and Turkish.

New Military Doctrine

Changes in security concepts will not significantly modify the basic roles of the armed forces in assuring national sovereignty and protecting the constitutional establishment. But these tasks have a different scope and do not emphasize excessive concern with the issues of sovereignty and borders. Albania has overcome the malady of nationalism and has settled its boundaries internationally; it keeps armaments under strict control and trains primarily for defensive operations. Therefore, Albania will not be an aggressor in any European wars.

Nevertheless, since this is not a perfect world and Balkan turmoil continues, an ethnos or country may provoke an occasional crisis or limited conflict. Moreover, some crucial questions concerning future threats and the role and missions of Albanian forces confront the new military administration. As a consequence of these changes in the security environment, the mission of the armed forces and their military doctrine in general had to be revised.

The changing times made it imperative that the Albanian government prepare an official document dealing with security matters -- something that had never been the case before. As a consequence, in April 1995 the Council of Defense approved "The Security and Defense Policy of Albania," a copy of which was presented to NATO's Secretary-General Willy Claes during the NACC's ministers of defense meeting last May.

From a "tool" of the dictatorship of the proletariat -- meaning not only to defend the country from outside but also the socialist system from within -- the armed forces now have a wider defensive mission. They defend Albania militarily from external aggression and protect its sovereignty and territorial integrity. Simultaneously, the forces protect Albania and its citizens against unconstitutional political coercion, promote military stability in the region, serve peace and international security in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, help in catastrophes, save lives in emergencies, and support humanitarian actions.

A brand new military doctrine is being developed and coordinated by the Council of Defense. It reflects the new geopolitical situation and Albania's wish to integrate more closely with the international defense system. The new doctrine takes into account the possibility of new types of threats, which, in turn, has led to new structural changes in the armed forces. Currently, troops are being relocated, causing a number of economic, political, social, and purely personal problems.

Albania's military doctrine has a defensive orientation. This reflects the strategic military objectives of a small country with limited economic possibilities as well as the character of the historical traditions of the Albanian people. Its military doctrine, built upon acceptance of its geographical position, has always had as its objective the protection of national interests,

independence, and territorial integrity. It has never been the case in the course of history that Albanians attacked another people. On the contrary, there have been a great many occasions when the Albanian people and their territory were selected as targets of aggression and invasion. These consequences are felt to this very day.

In compliance with the defensive character of Albanian military doctrine, its armed forces are oriented to conduct only defensive operations and actions against the rear lines of the aggressor. The specific geographic conditions of Albania have been borne in mind in preparing its defense system. Special attention is focused on important objects, lines, and regions in the operational sense as well as politico-administrative and economic centers. A special defensive role is assigned to formations and units of the first echelon. During initial defensive operations, land forces are used to deter aggression. This requires the maintenance of a high degree of mobilization and combat readiness in peacetime.

In case of armed attack, the army will mobilize all its forces to repel aggression and restore the state border. Considerable attention is attached to preparing the territory of the country and the population for defense. In accordance with the requirements of defensive doctrine, the General Staff of the Albanian Army is transforming units of ground forces into a new organizational structure based on defense-oriented divisions. Understandably, these will be smaller in number. At the same time, the units will be provided with more defensive components. The training of the Albanian army also focuses on defensive actions. All plans and programs as well as ordnance and guidelines for combat training are prepared in this spirit. The reforms in the army will have considerable impact on the training structure and staff preparation for conducting both military tasks and operations which assist the civilian population.

Interoperability and Standards of Performance

One of the greatest achievements in the relationship between NATO and Albania under the PFP framework has been the development of cooperative military links. The purpose of these are joint planning and training exercises to strengthen the ability of Albanian armed forces to undertake missions in the fields of peacekeeping, search and rescue, humanitarian operations and others, as may be subsequently agreed upon. Participation in joint exercises familiarizes the Albanian army with NATO operational planning procedures and improves its ability to work together with friendly forces in actual missions. The formation of units that can participate in peacekeeping exercises and operations alongside NATO will result in closer harmonization of Albanian force structures with those of NATO.

During 1995, the Albanian armed forces were engaged in 12 joint exercises. The first, organized in January under the PFP program, was a search and rescue exercise coded "Sarex-95." Participating forces included land, naval, and air forces from Albania, the United States, Italy, Great Britain, and Germany as well as observers from Turkey, Spain, Greece, France, and Slovenia. It was followed by the humanitarian exercise "Medceur-95", which involved forces from Albania, the United States, Turkey, and Bulgaria, and observers from Greece, Hungary, and Italy. Another humanitarian exercise, code-named "Crystal Water", was held in July with forces from Albania and the United States. A project costing 1.5 million dollars was part of this

exercise. Separate joint exercises were held between special forces of Albania and those of the United States as well as naval forces of Albania and Turkey.

In July 1995, the exercise "Rescue Eagle" was conducted north of Durres by Albanian military forces and the US Sixth Fleet. Albania considers this the largest and most meaningful exercise in Central and Eastern Europe. Apart from Albanian forces, the US amphibious force of the Sixth Fleet and 1700 marines of the 24th Marine Expedition Unit participated. US helicarrier "Kearsarge" and USS "Nashville" were also involved. This great seacoast exercise was followed by another one occurring in the hinterland and coded "Peaceful Eagle." It dealt with peacekeeping operations.

A review of these exercises concluded that they were resounding successes and excellent performances. Planned and executed in a remarkably short time, the exercises provided quality training on common tasks. The troops did situational training and began to develop a common understanding of search and rescue doctrine, to appreciate the value of interoperability, and to learn how to operate in a multinational environment. But, even more significantly, they became friends. They learned to trust one another and to understand that they could tackle the challenges of search and rescue as a team.

During this past year, for the first time in their history, Albanian troops took part in exercises outside their own country. The first was exercise "New Spirit-95" in May 1995, taking place in Kalamata, Greece, where troops from Greece, Albania, United States, Bulgaria, and Romania joined efforts in a disaster relief scenario. Preparations are being made for another field training exercise code-named "Cooperative Dragon-Esperia," in Cellina Meduna, Italy, where Italian troops with forces from Albania, Spain, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovak Republic will develop a common understanding of peacekeeping operations and enhance military interoperability by exercising selected basic military skills at unit and subunit level under a NATO lead.

During August 1995, troops from Albania, alongside those from thirteen other PFP nations, participated in "Operation Cooperative Nugget-95." It represented the first joint NATO-PFP exercise ever held on American soil and took place at Fort Polk, Louisiana. This exercise enhanced interoperability of communications procedures and tactics as well as interoperability from a political perspective. Also, it created a process allowing European nations to participate in the overall improvement of the security situation in Europe via military exercises and dialogue, which is necessary to develop "a European security identity." The participating Albanian troops were exposed to the standards which are traditional in the Alliance, and now, indeed they may be considered ready to work side-by-side with NATO partners to respond to a variety of possible contingencies.

In other areas, an International Conference on Naval Legislation was recently held in Tirana with participants from Albania, United States, Bulgaria, and Ukraine. The aim of the conference was to create an organized maritime service, and the Albanian draft code of maritime service served as a pattern for other partner countries. Additionally, within the framework of regional initiatives for air traffic control, the experts from Albania, Bulgaria, Romania, and Slovenia, with the

support of US specialists, studied the ways and means of establishing a modern air traffic and coordination system.

Conclusions

From the perspective of extensive interaction through PFP, Albania seeks to reach two objectives: first, to maintain the capability and readiness to contribute to UN operations and, second, to develop forces that are better able to operate with those of the members of the North Atlantic Alliance. These far-reaching aims will advance cooperation and facilitate the long-term goal of eventual NATO membership.

The cooperation envisioned under PFP, however entails substantial costs. Presently, Albania is not able to afford these expenses. There are costs in making some of its equipment compatible with NATO standards, especially communications. Also, costs are incurred in bilateral staff talks, technical exchanges, officer training, and joint exercises. The government is quite willing to provide forces to take part in peacekeeping operations alongside those of the United States and NATO, but the extremely low defense budget and lack of resources in Albania has made it necessary for some NATO countries to share certain costs of this expanded cooperation. Matching Albania's funds appropriated toward implementation of the PFP program provides concrete support for the country in its integration efforts.

For all these reasons, Albania perceives the PFP as an essential part of the transformation of its armed forces. The Albanian military aims to create armed forces which will fulfill the defensive needs of a small state in times of crisis and war. Concurrently, Albania is gradually trying to bridge the structural and qualitative gap between its armed forces and those of the developed Western European countries and to create real capabilities for integration into NATO's military structures. This concept responds to actual risks and possible threats to Albania, taking into account the requirement to defend the country with its own assets; but it does not define a particular adversary.

It is understandable that Albania cannot be fully incorporated and integrated into the NATO structures overnight, even if a peaceful solution is found in the Balkans. The process of adapting its armed forces to western standards will take time, particularly in terms of technical aspects. First of all, Albania is striving for compatibility of its command, control, and communication systems. Next, it must achieve standardization of command procedures, training, and maps. Then, even if Albania were not yet a NATO member, its defense potential could be effectively supported in time of need based on and following appropriate consultations. In that respect, Albania hopes that PFP will be useful in making it possible for Albanian and NATO forces to soon operate together.