MINISTRY OF DEFENSE OF THE REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA

DEFENSE DIRECTIVE 2023

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic and the Russian armed and unjustified aggression against Ukraine have drastically changed the security environment and its perception among citizens. It is clear that we are now facing serious real challenges.

The Russian aggression on Ukraine, the economic crisis that followed it, and the continuous fear of a further escalation of the conflict or the use of nuclear weapons have shaken the tranquility of Europe and the whole world, marking the entry into a "new era" in defense and security. What happens on the eastern borders of the Alliance is also reflected in the Balkan region, where ethnic divisions, political crises, malignant influences of certain states and their proxy countries can be considered triggering factors for destabilization.

Armed conflicts have reappeared on the borders of the EU after a long time, and new threats to security have already materialized, including cyber-attacks, hybrid threats, terrorism, disinformation, climate change, economic and energy crises, and even artificial intelligence. In this increasingly difficult security environment, interaction with partner countries to control and prevent different situations that endanger the peace and security of Albanian citizens is a primary duty. Albanian citizens deserve to live in a safe and stable environment. In this context, the Armed Forces of the Republic of Albania bear a great responsibility: the responsibility to guarantee and ensure a peaceful and safe environment for everyone.

During 2022, the Ministry of Defense and the Armed Forces showed a high level of responsibility and professionalism. There were significant financial and legal developments directly related to the treatment of military personnel, from a significant increase in their salaries to a more comprehensive financial and logistical treatment for civilian and military personnel. We made significant progress also in the field of modernization with the expansion of the capabilities of the Armed Forces, starting with the addition of aircraft, as well as the increase of maritime and air space detection capabilities. For 2023, our challenges and commitments will continue to be of the same intensity, without avoiding our main task, that of protecting the Motherland.

We will continue to pursue with absolute priority our commitment as a NATO member in defense of Euro-Atlantic security, as well as continuing our presence in UN and EU missions. An important part of the mission and duties of the structures of the Ministry of Defense and the Armed Forces of the Republic of Albania will also be the national response and the contribution always made in support of the civilian population, in case of natural disasters or other civil emergencies. I express my conviction that the men and women in uniform part of the Ministry of Defense and the Armed Forces will successfully achieve the objectives, giving the maximum contribution.

Niko Peleshi
Minister of Defense of the Republic of Albania

MAIN AREAS OF ACTIVITY FOR THE YEAR 2023

1. Conceptual framework in the field of defense and security.

There shall continue the process of reviewing the Military Strategy and, as a result, harmonize and complete the Long-Term Development Plan for the Armed Forces (AF) 2023-2031, which should determine, among other things, the future structure of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Albania (AAF).

The process of planning and drawing up national defense plans is recommended to be in full harmony and interaction with that of the Alliance, as well as reflect NATO's New Strategic Concept 2022, the New Force Model and be based on the different projections that the current security reality has.

The 2022-2025 Integrity Plan, as the first document drafted by the Ministry of Defense, to contribute to the prevention and fight against corruption, should be extended to the General Staff of the AF and subordinate structures, as well as serve as a mechanism for orienting measures towards strengthening integrity and addressing the risks brought about by the phenomenon of corruption.

2. Good management and development of defense resources.

➢ Human resources, recruitment, promotion:

The materialization of the salary increase to the level of 30% for the military personnel of AAF, as well as the promise of a second increase for 2023 are a very positive development with a wide impact on the daily life of the military. This increase, combined with the significant improvement of the military infrastructure, we believe it will have an even more positive impact on the junior ranks who appreciate projecting their future in the AF.

The qualification and education of the personnel will be based on the most modern programs designed at the Armed Forces Academy (AAF) and Defense and Security College.

During 2023, practices will continue for the complete transfer of recruitment offices to the city centers, preferably near the municipalities. Recruitment will put the candidate at the center of the process, ensuring she/he is treated with dignity at every stage of selection, which helps the Armed Forces obtain the right quality and quantity in recruitment.

An optimal selection for the conditions of our society is achieved by transforming traditional recruitment systems, using examples of best practices from the history and rich heritage of AAF, as well as by conducting a specific, preliminary analysis based on social and demographic developments around the country.

➢ Education, training and exercise:

The transformation of the Higher Military Education (HME) system will continue, as an integral part of the national higher education.

The Defense and Security College (DSC), as a newly created structure, through courses will prepare future commanders and leaders at all levels, as well as officers capable of working and interacting in NATO headquarters and operational structures. In this direction, the DSC will continue the work for syllabus unification for all qualification courses for officers, from the basic level to the highest course.

Consolidation of the Innovation Center will be the focus of AAF. This center equips the institution with the necessary laboratory technology and infrastructure, thus aiming to create a supportive environment for the scientific research process in the field of defense and security.

The exercise will remain a priority for the fulfillment of the constitutional mission of the AF, the level of ambition and commitments in the missions and operations of NATO, EU and the UN. Recent

developments have brought forth the necessity to transform and reform the training process and method. Combat operations, schemes of maneuvers, as well as Ukraine's response should help us identify valuable lessons, in order to "train to fight", producing results even under great pressure.
The main focus during 2023 will be the organization, completion and realization of the command-control of the Multinational Brigade Task Force South, for the participation in the exercise "Defender Europe 23".

- **Material resources:**

The continuation of investments in the field of infrastructure with the aim of improving working, living and training conditions of the AF personnel and increasing the security in the storage of military materials is considered as a process of special importance.

Our intention is to improve the national capabilities and contributions to provide logistical support for the troops engaged in missions/operations abroad within the framework of NATO or other coalitions, through the provision of strategic (air, sea, land and combined) transport, for the deployment and redeployment of troops, the establishment and testing of the National Support Element (NSE) and making best use of NATO's "LOGAFS" Program, for the planning and execution of logistical support.

Work will be focused on the reorganization of the repair and maintenance capacities of road vehicles, focusing on all its elements and based on the functional elements of "DOTMILPFI", as well as the Testing of the Automated Logistics Program (ALP), for the management of materials in AF inventory.

- **Financial resources:**

Firm, accountable regulation of the MoD budget as well as compliance within our budgetary requirements and in support of the defense programs, will be the essential criteria that will give us favorable options in the field of defense. The main aim will be to develop capabilities, in the framework of the modernization of the AF and international commitments.

The budget should be realized in accordance with the objectives for increasing transparency and the fight against corruption, aiming to increase the effectiveness of expenses, as well as the continuity of support of investment projects, in fulfillment of main priorities, within the framework of the modernization of the AF and international commitments.

Securing and supporting the AF with financial resources, gradually increasing the Defense budget, towards of 2% of GDP, will be the focus of financial commitments.

3. Legal support for MoD/AF structures.

The structures of the Ministry of Defense, which have the legal framework of the EU, mandatory for alignment, will be fully committed to the presentation of the concrete legal situation, as part of the procedural steps for Bilateral Screening, as well as the follow-up of the implementation of the recommendations. For the year 2023, the priority will be the approval of the draft decision on the approval of the rules and procedures for the creation of the system of tracking and identification of explosives.
Other priority in the context of legal adaptation will be the revision of the draft law for some additions and amendments to law no. 64/2014 "On the powers and authorities of the direction and command of the AAF", as a need for change that arises as a necessity of the structural changes that the Armed Forces have undergone over the years. The component that is being implemented, that of reservists as an immediate need, will require by law the creation and operation of the organic structure of the

reserve forces in practical and real terms in AAF. Also, in the legal acts for the year 2023, draft decisions on missions and operations within NATO should not be missing.

4. Development of Armed Forces' capabilites.

The development of AAF capabilities should be oriented towards the fulfillment of the constitutional mission and collective defense of the Alliance, in harmony with the NATO Defense Planning Process (NDPP). The focus will be on the capabilities declared in NATO, maintaining and consolidating the level of readiness for the light infantry battalion group, as the main contribution to the Alliance, but also with *niche capabilities*, such as: EOD, CBRN, SOLTG, etc.

Support of GBKL elements, as well as the development of static and deployable networks of communication and information systems. Special attention should also be paid to the fulfillment of the qualitative requirements of the Objective Capabilities (OC), according to the respective definitions and obligations from the NATO document of the Objective Capabilities (CT 2021) in the short-term and medium-term plans.

- **Modernization:**

Threats from traditional and non-traditional security challenges should prompt a thorough assessment of the most efficient modernization strategies and ways to enable the AF to have the necessary means for the future. In practice, it is important to consider modernization as a multi-level and unstoppable process. This will apply not only to the command and control chain of AAF, at the national level, but also at the international level, carefully preserving this necessary dualism.

Land Force will follow the completion of armored vehicles, tactical equipment, weapons and accessories for all types of light infantry weapons, completion of fire support systems. The objective will also be to create the capabilities of anti-tank and anti-aircraft defense. At the same time, the completion of the enemy's artillery location radar system, short-range and very short-range close air defense systems, as well as the ROL-2 hospital will continue.

Naval Force will continue with the modernization for the renewal of the main systems of the Integrated Maritime Surveillance System, the development of the capabilities of the Diving Center as a national capacity, the provision of communication equipment for the boarding group and special equipment for maritime interdiction operations.

Air Force will continue with increasing the capabilities of the air fleet with Blackhawk helicopters, anti-aircraft defense capabilities and equipment with unmanned combat capabilities. Also, the Level II+ Aircraft Maintenance Center will be set up and operational. The Air Force will have a dedicated commitment to the implementation of the NATO project and the operationalization of Kuçova Air Base.

Support Command will continue with the completion of the EOD Company with special vehicles, as well as the continuation of the implementation of the modernization project with transport and special vehicles for the AF.

- **Readiness and Operationality:**

Work shall focus on the development and maintenance of readiness of land, sea, air capabilities, as well as logistic support at all levels of command and control (C2). The main goal is participation in national and collective defense operations, rapid response to unforeseen crises and dealing with civil emergencies/natural disasters as efficiently as possible.

Continuation of fulfillment of AF commitments for participation in international operations as well as the fulfillment of obligations within the Alliance, in accordance with the New Force Model (NFM)

and the implementation of the concept of deterrence and defense (DDA), synchronizing the country's defense plans with the Alliance's family plans, the deployment of the country's Infrastructural and Logistics Capabilities (ILC) as part of the implementation of these plans.

- **Interoperability:**

Increasing interoperability both within the AF and with other countries of the Alliance will be the main objective in training activities and capability development, based on the concepts and doctrines of the Alliance.

The process of standardization to support the AAF modernization plans, by selecting, ratifying and implementing those STANAGs that have an impact on the fulfillment of AAF priorities, the implementation of the OC and those considered critical by the Alliance for increasing the level of interaction in missions and operations led by it.

5. Consolidation of the Civil Protection System.

The primary priority is the continuation of the processes stemming from the acquisition of the status of a member country in the European Civil Protection Mechanism. This process will enable the strengthening of capabilities and appropriate standards in technology, training, exercise and joint operations in this area. The practice of communication and interaction with citizens should be of particular importance, in order to lay the foundations of mutual understanding between the institution and the civilian population, in case of natural and man-made disasters.

For the year 2023 and beyond, investments should be foreseen in the framework of studies on large dams, river embankments and water basins. In the National Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction, the improvement of the legislation related to the Civil Protection System should also be foreseen, in order to align with the European legislation. The start of work on the new law on Critical Infrastructure should be considered as a priority.

Also, we should have a review of the Early Warning System. Work must be done on its improvement and modernization through various projects, which include a wide range, from the revision of laws and bylaws in force to the necessary investments for the timely notification system among population and structures, with aim of increasing the speed of response.
Planning necessary material reserves aims at the improvement of national and international resources, increase of transport and storage capacities, in order to help the population affected by various natural disasters, which bring immediate and severe damage.

6. Cyber Defense.

Cyber-attacks continue to increase in frequency and complexity, and Cyber Defense is one of the most integral parts of the Ministry of Defense's Cyber Security Strategy. Cyber defense must be exercised as a coordinated resistance action in defense of information, systems and networks.

The Military Cyber Security Unit, as a newly formed organism, must speed up the training of operators, as well as completion of modern capabilities, with a view to providing an invisible but vital service for defense. The development of the Cyber Security Operational Center shall continue, equipped with modern systems and training, which will enable its uninterrupted operation.

7. International engagement and cooperation.

Coordination at the political level with our strategic partners and NATO allied countries will continue to be an absolute priority for 2023. Our diplomacy in the field of defense and security is clear and will be concretized, as follows:

- We will continue to be contributors in the international arena through our engagement as a nonpermanent elected country in the UN Security Council for the year 2023. Work will be done to increase the participation of AAF personnel in the UN.
- We will maintain at the highest levels the diplomatic consultation and interoperability in this field with the Alliance structures, trying to have as dignified a representation as possible at the Vilnius Summit (July 11-12, 2023), NATO Ministerials of the Ministers of Defense, and meetings of other levels of the political sphere.
- Now, with the acquisition of the status of "candidate country", special attention should be paid for the year 2023 to the cooperation in the field of defense and security with the European Union, aiming at the absorption of funds, implementation of projects, alignment of legislation, and fulfillment of obligations at the national level.
- We will continue to be an active partner in the OSCE, participating in the annual activities of this organization, submitting relevant reports and information, as well as becoming part of new projects, arms control inspections, etc.
- This year, too, there will representation at ministerial meetings, meetings of political directors, meetings of the Chiefs of Staff, and other more technical level meetings in regional initiatives/organizations, such as: USA-Adriatic Charter (A5), Southeast Europe Defense Ministry (SEDM), RACVIAC, CEDC+WB, DECI, BMTF, FNC etc.
- Cooperation at the bilateral level will continue to be proactive and intensive between the relevant structures of the Ministry of Defense and the General Staff with foreign military attachés accredited to our country, as well as with the military attachés of the Republic of Albania in the allied countries, with the aim of realizing of all the activities scheduled in the respective plans and matrices.
- Bilateral cooperation plans, like every year, will be aimed to be fully concluded within the first two months of 2023.
- Albania at the regional level will also follow the policy of good neighborhood, correctness, and cooperation with the countries of the Western Balkans for the year 2023, clearly and strongly promoting the policy of "open doors" in the region. Kosovo, of course, even for 2023, on the diplomatic level, remains our national interest.

8. Strategic Communication.

Strategic Communication shall aim at conveying the best message, through the right channels, towards well-thought-out and specific goals, using the development of messages with high levels of planning and audience perceptions, to transparently make known the activity of Defense, as well as to help fulfill strategic interests.

CONCLUSIONS:

The Defense Directive 2023 will guide the activity of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Albania, to the fulfillment of its mission and duties. In the framework of implementation of this directive, I require all the structures of the Ministry of Defense and the Armed Forces to draw up plans, programs and projects oriented towards priorities and direction at work, as well as take all measures for their realization in time and with quality.