



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on Violence in Kosovo

As delivered by Ambassador Ian Kelly
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
July 28, 2011

The United States is deeply concerned with the turn of events in northern Kosovo. We continue to urge the Governments of Kosovo and Serbia to work with international partners to de-escalate the situation. The United States condemns the use of violence by any party and expresses its deepest condolences on the death of Kosovo Police Special Operations Officer Enver Zymberaj and all other casualties that may have resulted from the events this week.

The United States greatly appreciates the actions of KFOR to establish a safe and secure environment and freedom of movement, in accordance with its mandate provided by UNSC resolution 1244. We will continue to support KFOR and other international actors in this task.

On July 25, KFOR immediately responded to reports of the Kosovo Police Special Forces actions to take control of the gates and worked to stabilize the situation. There have been no movements in the north of Kosovo special units since July 26. Despite these efforts, we are deeply concerned about reports of increased tensions throughout the day yesterday (July 27), including allegations of arson at Gate 1, gunfire at KFOR personnel fired from the Serbian side of Gate 31, and threats of violence against non-Serbs in Bosnia Mahala in north Mitrovica.

While the United States regrets the Government of Kosovo's decision to take control of customs border crossings in northern Kosovo, a move taken without any notification to, or coordination with the international community, we welcomed Kosovo's coordination with KFOR to withdraw the Kosovo Special Police Forces. Since that time there have been no signs of the Kosovo Government taking uncoordinated decisions to provoke the situation.

We remain deeply concerned by indications of Serbian Interior Ministry police may be mobilizing and actively engaging in northern Kosovo, in direct violation of UN Security Council Resolution 1244, which demanded the withdrawal of all Serbian military, police, and paramilitary forces.

We continue to call upon officials in Belgrade and Pristina to establish a condition of positive reciprocity, one in which both people and goods move freely between Kosovo and Serbia. The Kosovo embargo on imports from Serbia, which has been in place for one week, and the Serbian embargo on imports from Kosovo, which has been in place for 135 weeks, are both illegal under the Central European Free Trade Agreement. Both should end simultaneously and soon. We are confident in the EU's management of the Dialogue between the two sides, which is the appropriate venue for achievement of the goal of free movement. We urge both sides to return immediately – and practically – to this task.

There has been much progress made in recent months, and even though the talks have stalled of late, we believe that there exists a significant mutual interest between the parties to bring all sides to the table at this critical time.

And in closing let me say that I greatly appreciate our Serbian colleague's assertion in her statement today that the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina must go on.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.