

## Press Club April 21, 2003 Question/Answer

QUESTION 1: In recent days there were many talks about new organizations seen in Kosovo, as you know Mr. Steiner has proclaimed this as terrorist organizations. How much question have you done in working with them?

GENERAL KEEFE: First, as you know, both NATO, KFOR, and EU supports Mr. Steiner's statements. I think what's worth noting; since KFOR first arrived here in 1999 we have always worked against bad people who want to take Kosovo back to the past. As I said in my opening statement, there is a small minority of people who want to be extremists. And KFOR is committed to stop that activity, provide a safe and secure environment for all the people of Kosovo.

QUESTION 2: (Lots of feedback from Mic) In terms of your activities, after year 1999, specifically where will you be in future that you operate here. If you can elaborate on what sort of evidence has come up that you support that ANA is a type of terrorist group Mr. Steiner proclaims. What is the difference between evidence you had before and evidence you have now?

GENERAL KEEFE: Well, First I think it's appropriate that I let Mr. Steiner speak for himself. Let UNMIK speak for themselves. In terms of specific information, the investigations are ongoing; I think it would be inappropriate for me to address any specific information. The second part of your question though is; what operations are we conducting-We consistently deny movement along the border and the ABL. KFOR remains very flexible in how it uses its forces. For example, right now there is a Norwegian Battalion operating in my Brigade sector in the Gjilani and Vitina municipalities. And that's the way we'll continue to operate. With flexibility and determination to maintain the environment that's safe and secure.

QUESTION 3: Mr. General, KFOR has arrested two persons in Gjilani. Can you tell us more about this arrest?

GENERAL KEEFE: With respect to detentions conducted by KFOR, those are conducted under the authority of UN Security Resolution 1244. Any detention that KFOR does, I take very seriously because I understand the ramifications of detaining somebody by KFOR. I want everyone in Kosovo to realize that when we detain somebody, we look at them based on information we have, as an immediate threat to the safety and security of all the people here. And I think everyone should have confidence in that. With respect to specific reasons it really would be inappropriate for me to comment, because that investigation is ongoing.

QUESTION 4: Sometimes in Media comments, new structure of Serbs operating, army structure, in relation of SRG?

GENERAL KEEFE: I don't understand, what?

QUESTION 4(again): I would with the SRG say that this organization should be placed on black list as well.

GENERAL KEEFE: (AGAIN #4)I'm not sure I understand the question. (To the interpreter)

QUESTION 4 revised by reporter: In your opinion should this organization be placed on black list?

GENERAL KEEFE: O.K. Well, those decisions one, are for UNMIK to make a decision of and frankly I've got my hands full in the Gjilani region and I don't have information or wouldn't comment on what occurs up in the Mitrovica region. My area of responsibility is down in this region.

QUESTION 5: General last month you said there is no evidence of an organized structure, an armed structure in Kosovo, and now you're saying you support Mr. Steiner's decision on branding Albanian National Army a terrorist group or an armed structure. In other words, what kind of evidence was there to make you now support the idea that it is now an organized group, organized structure in Kosovo?

GENERAL KEEFE: First, Thank you for that question. I think if you recall back on the last press conference the question revolved around a large army. I think the quote; people were talking about 600 people moving back across the ABL. And that's what I was referring to and I still don't see a large army. What I see is clearly people that are bad people that want to take Kosovo back to the past and that's not new. Next question.

QUESTION 6: General, Russian KFOR is claiming they are withdrawing from Kosovo, journalists they say that Russians are leaving Kosovo not happy with what's going on in Kosovo. They say they have not achieved what they wanted to achieve due to the security in Kosovo.

GENERAL KEEFE: Is there a question there?

QUESTION 6 again revised: I want to know your comments on the Russian Patrol KFOR calling the NATO mission not successful?

GENERAL KEEFE: First off, the reasons for the Russians to depart is a Russian political decision, it would be inappropriate for me to comment on the reason. But what is appropriate for me to comment on is; let me tell you about the Russian performance in this sector over 4 years. They've made a tremendous contribution. You've seen here in Kosovo for 4 years, Russian and American soldiers, working side by side to make this a better environment for everybody. I'm proud to have been part of that and I commend LTC Paninski for his leadership and I wish all the Russian soldiers all the best in the future. They've been great teammates and I appreciate that.

QUESTION 7: Is ANA active or not active in your sector?

GENERAL KEEFE: As I've said already there are clearly extremists and there are bad people throughout Kosovo that are trying to take Kosovo back to the past. What we find is they say they are politically motivated but we end up really learning that they're just criminals. I'm convinced

they're a small group of individuals. And I think the vast majority of the people in Kosovo want to move forward to a democratic western style society that protects the rights of everybody.

QUESTION 8: We have seen the initiative of US government to encourage companies from coalition countries to apply for sub contracting with US companies who will initially be sent to rebuild Iraq. Does this initiative apply to the Kosovo companies? In other words, do you see Kosovo as coalition partner?

GENERAL KEEFE: First with respect to what's going on in Iraq, my focus is what's going on in Kosovo and that's where my attention is, and that's where my base of knowledge is. Kosovo is a protector under the United Nations led by Mr. Steiner. Since my responsibility is to support UNMIK and provide safe and security, I would leave it to; and I would leave any discussion like that to the United Nations.

QUESTION 9: General in your sector, in the eastern sector, there are cases when detained persons are freed after they find out they are not a danger to the environment, and many times, we see searches of their houses. In this context, can KFOR verify if those people are a danger to the environments, those people that are arrested or detained or searched in order so we can respect the human rights and the rights of the citizens?

GENERAL KEEFE: Well, first we go out of our way because we understand the gravity of the detention to respect people whom we search houses or detain them. We don't give out their names because again, we're protecting their rights and respecting that if we do release them they are not tainted or accused. And often, they are transferred to UNMIK control for trial. But, I would just end it in saying that we take the responsibility very seriously, and very carefully protect everyone's rights.

QUESTION 10: General in recent days there are talks between Macedonians about opening new border cross. Have the Macedonian side contacted you up to now, and made direct talks with Serbian? And what is the stand of KFOR to this request of the Macedonian government?

GENERAL KEEFE: Well, First they haven't contacted KFOR because it's a political issue and discussions are ongoing with the UN. The original agreement as you know, provides a mechanism for landowners to have access to their land on the other side. And so the opening of a new border facilitates that and I'm very much in favor of it. And I look for the parties involved, hopefully, to reach agreement. Are there any other questions?

QUESTION 11: How do you assess security status in Kacanik region? Kacanik is a town close to the border of Macedonia. There have been statements in media the \_\_\_\_\_  
Are more active in \_\_\_\_\_?

GENERAL KEEFE: Well, think not just with respect to Kacanik, but the whole Gjilani region that I'm responsible for. And I compare my experience not only with these six months, but also going

back to 2001, when I first came to Kosovo. In my view there's no comparison, the level of violence, the freedom of movement, the continued returns of individuals to their homes as definitely improved. But like I said in my opening statement, there are extremists, there are criminals, there are people that would like this society to be unstable. And I ask everybody to reject them. America has sent her sons and daughters here to Kosovo to give this people an opportunity, and we're committed to that and I look forward to working with all the people of Kosovo towards that same end. Thank you all very much for coming to Bondsteel today.