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Harland: UNMIK to stay in Serb areas

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UNMIK Deputy Chief David Harland said on Sunday that the U.N. mission in Kosovo will stay in Serb-populated areas in spite of 70 percent personnel cuts to be carried out as part of the reconfiguration process over the next three months.

“We currently have around 4,000 staff in Kosovo, the majority of whom are in the police. The mission will be scaled down by roughly 70 percent over the next three months,” said Harland.

Harland also said that following the staff cuts, as part of the mission's reconfiguration process, the presence would be minimal in the Albanian areas, but that it will be very significant in the Serb-populated areas "in order to avoid a security vacuum.”

Harland underlined that the remaining 30 percent of UNMIK personnel would be able to depart if EULEX representatives reached an agreement with Serbia on deploying the EU mission in areas inhabited by Serbs, and if such a decision was endorsed by the UN Security Council.

Meanwhile, in Brussels, Russian Ambassador to the European Union Vladimir Chizocv has said that Moscow, in principle, does not have anything against the EU's presence in the province, provided that such a presence is to be agreed upon with Belgrade and approved by the UN Security Council.

This is not yet the case.