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NATO seeks agreement on keeping troops in Kosovo regardless of status

KosovoCompromise Staff

NATO foreign affairs ministers, meeting on Friday in Brussels, and seeking an agreement on keeping troops in Kosovo regardless of the status solution.

In their final communique, the ministers will support the Contact Group Troika's report on the talks between Belgrade and Pristina, as well as all international efforts aimed at finding a solution.

They will also urge all sides to refrain from violence.

The NATO ministers are discussing Kosovo with their EU counterparts at the informal Transatlantic dinner on Thursday night, as well as with the Russian minister Sergei Lavrov at the NATO-Russia Council.

At the Friday meeting, the US is expected to ask from NATO not to reduce the number of troops in Kosovo nor lower their readiness to act in the case of flaring up of violence.

Washington will also call for the troops to remain in Kosovo under resolution 1244 even in the case of a unilateral declaration of independence.

Such a position, however, might cause legal chaos as the UN SC resolution 1244 explicitly implies the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Serbia in Kosovo.

Possible reinforcements of troops – which might account to up to four batallions with more than 3,000 soldiers – will be discussed as well at the meeting.

On Wednesday, Serbian Defense Minister Dragan Sutanovac during a visit to France said that KFOR's French contingent was ready to react if anyone tried to destabilize the situation in Kosovo.

The French soldiers are stationed in the divided town Kosovska Mitrovica, which has on several occasions seen the Albanians trying to enter the Serb part of the town by force.

Sutanovac said that French Defense Ministry officials had promised him they would do everything to prevent any clashes in Kosovo and would disable all those who wanted to destabilize the province.



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According to Sutanovac, the conclusion of the discussion was that the security situation in southern Serbia, western Macedonia and the region as a whole was relatively safe, but that the period after December 10, when the Contact Group's Troika is to submit its report on the negotiations between Belgrade and Pristina, was uncertain.