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EU admits Eulex delay

KosovoCompromise Staff

The European Union has officially admitted delays in the deployment of its troubled Eulex mission, as the Italian Foreign Minister Franco Frattini announced the start for operations in September or October, rather than mid-June as previously planned.

"I believe EULEX could be operative on the field after the summer – September and October," Frattini said after discussions among EU ministers in Brussels.

Slovak Foreign Minister Jan Kubis, who attended the meeting, told KosovoCompromise.com there was "general understanding" among EU ministers about the need to find an agreement with the UN on the functioning of the Eulex mission.

"We discussed the reconfiguration of the UN mission and how it could include the Eulex mission ... Our general understanding is that there is a need to reach an agreement between the UN and the EU on the question of Eulex, with an engagement from Belgrade and Pristina", Kubis said.

He said Slovakia would prefer a new UN Security Council Resolution.

"If this is not possible, then we would need a specific agreement between the UN and the EU", Kubis said.

« Details are being discussed. For us, the most important thing is the pursuit of the UN presence on the basis of UN Security Council resolution 1244. Such a UN presence would provide an umbrella for EU work in Kosovo", he said.

The EU High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana said he would meet on Thursday in Stockholm with UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon.

He said he expected the Unmik and Eulex mission to function together "for some time".

Meanwhile, the United Kingdom deployed additional 200 troops to Serb-populated northern Kosovo on Sunday, in apparent attempt to minimize the risk of renewed violence after the province's newly adopted constitution comes to power on June 15.

A total of 600 members of the NATO operational reserve will be deployed in Kosovo's north by Tuesday for a month-long tour, amid ongoing talks between the



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UN and the European Union on ways to come out of trouble caused by province's unilateral declaration of independence on February 17.

Kosovo has been relatively calm after the February's developments, with only one outbreak of serious violence in mid-March, as international police stormed the courthouse in northern Kosovska Mitrovica, which was the scene of Serbian protest.

Day-long clashes resulted with the death of a Ukrainian policeman and some 150 people injured, peacekeepers and demonstrators alike, causing a series of disputes between high-ranking UNMIK officials and thorough investigation from the UN New York headquarters.

The United States have made a comment recently that the UN was beginning to downsize its presence in Kosovo, but that is inaccurate as the mission has orders from New York to continue at full-strength and at normal operation.

Meanwhile, the EU is still working on staffing the Eulex mission and the U.S. had confirmed that it is negotiating its exact role in the mission and will most likely participate.

It is expected that the US contingent will reduce in number from 220 officers to 80 officers for Kosovo under Eulex, diplomats in Kosovo told KosovoCompromise.com.

The main task of fresh British troops will be providing the security to several Serb enclaves in northern part of Kosovo, including the medieval Devic monastery, surrounded by hostile Albanian villages in the former guerrilla stronghold of Drenica.

Some 16,000 NATO soldiers from 34 countries have been deployed in Kosovo, as a part of Kfor.