



MINISTRY OF DEFENSE OF THE REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA

DEFENSE DIRECTIVE 2024

Preamble

The global order is currently confronted with the use of military force for territorial expansion, geopolitical changes and increased security threats, which now appear both in conventional and hybrid forms, including in cyberspace, the information space, but also in the economic, social and political spheres. Security challenges are also exacerbated by the partial lack of control over cyber interventions, the development of technologies and artificial intelligence.

Albania's strategic interests are closely linked to the fulfillment of its obligations as a NATO member and a candidate country for the European Union, as well as to the protection and security of the territory as defined by the Constitution of the Republic of Albania and the North Atlantic Treaty. Recent terrorist attacks and repeated acts of destabilization in the north of Kosovo, increased ethnic tensions in the region, as well as the Russian and Chinese ambitions and influence in selected countries of the Western Balkans, make the need for increased resources and investment in the development of defense capabilities even more urgent.

Strengthening the international and regional role and engagement in restoring peace and stability, increasing the level of security, as well as cooperating with international actors in the management of potential crises, places the security and defense structures in the primary role in guaranteeing a safe and stable environment.

In this geopolitical situation, the Ministry of Defense (MoD) and the Armed Forces of the Republic of Albania (AFRA) as the main structure for guaranteeing security and protection, remain a decisive factor in achieving concrete results and implementing commitments in the framework of collective defense and preservation of national values and interests.

During 2023, the MoD and its structures have achieved important objectives in the field of modernization with the increase of the Armed Forces capabilities, the improvement of the financial treatment of military and civilian personnel, also with the valuable contribution of the Armed Forces and the team of Civil Protection, in support of the community through various operations to help the population and in cases of natural disasters.

For 2024, the main commitments and priorities of the work of the MoD and the AFRA will be related to the enhancement of national and Euro-Atlantic security, the development of the airspace system and capabilities, the continued presence in NATO, EU and UN missions, as well as the direct contribution to the support of the civilian population, in the event of possible civil emergencies.

I am confident that MoD and AFRA will successfully fulfill all commitments, and contribute to the achievement of the planned objectives, with concrete and measurable results, that will have an impact not only nationally but also internationally.

Niko Peleshi
Ministër i Mbrojtjes i Republikës së Shqipërisë



1. Review of Strategic Documents

In the current deteriorated security environment, our country remains an important factor and is fully committed to maintaining peace and regional and global stability. As a NATO member and an EU candidate country, there is a need to review, draft and implement strategic documents in the field of security and defense, in particular: the Military Strategy and the Long Term Plan for the Development of the Armed Forces. These documents, will enable the assessment of risks and threats; the redefinition of the level of ambition; the development of capabilities and forces; military response options; the strengthening of the military instrument and stability; as well as harmonization with NATO and EU dynamics, policies and plans.

2. Defense Budget and Investments

Priority is given to the needs of the MoD and the Armed Forces, to fulfill the constitutional mission and legal obligations, based on the requirements of the Capability targets, the Defense Programs, the Integrated List of Priorities for the years 2024-2029, the needs to address risks and threats that arise in today's security environment, as well as obligations to NATO, Chapter 31 of the EU Common Security and Defense Policy and other international commitments.

Achieving a defense budget of 2 per cent of GDP in 2024 and allocating at least 20 per cent of this budget to major military equipment, in line with the Alliance's Defense Investment Pledge, should serve as an impetus not only for the transparent and efficient use of funds, but also as an indicator of political credibility, international standing and commitment to our strategic alliances.

3. Personnel Care

a. Meritocracy and Equal Opportunities

In every organization, particularly in security and defense sector, human capital is the most crucial and irreplaceable asset. The responsible structures and commissions should ensure the advancement of appropriate personnel in education and career, based on meritocracy, by providing equal opportunities, transparency and avoiding bureaucracy. The promotion of capable and trustworthy personnel is essential for achieving success and ensuring sustainable development.

b. Treatment Improvement

Continuous improvement of the financial treatment is necessary, to maintain expertise and experience, especially when facing a lucrative market and competition outside AFRA. This will also help to attract quality resources that will contribute to important sectors of MoD/AFRA. Therefore, in 2024, the treatment of active military personnel should continue to improve, supported by the necessary legal framework.

c. Health Care

Improving healthcare for active and retired military members, their families and civilian personnel who serve in AFRA remains essential. The newly established analysis laboratory and the dental clinic should be fully operational and equipped with modern medical equipment. Additionally, health structures should be trained to improve the quality of medical services to MoD/AFRA personnel.

The plan should include the establishment of the Military Medical Information Management System. This will increase the efficiency of medical services and enable rapid exchange of medical information with allied and partner countries during troop deployment in missions and operations.

4. Development of Critical Capabilities and Resilience

In addition to recent important modernization and capability developments in the Armed Forces, in 2024 and beyond, our focus will remain the development of critical defense capabilities, in line with the Article 3 of the Alliance for the strengthening of National Resilience, specifically:

- The establishment of Ground-Based Air Defense capability and the operational capability of stationary and mobile systems for the detection and neutralization of objects of unmanned aerial vehicles (C-UAS) for the protection of the population, critical infrastructure and military installations of the country;
- Strengthening anti-drone capabilities by increasing technical and professional education and training for selected personnel, ensuring readiness for any task and mission.
- The implementation of the Light Infantry Group-Battalion Capability, constitutes the key objective; as a commitment to the Alliance. In the current conditions, in addition to the positive achievements of recent years, it remains critical to complete it with all the combat and combat service components;
- The consolidation of the Blackhawk Helicopter Fleet, two of which will be delivered in January 2024, is essential for possible engagements in NATO or the EU, as well as from a national perspective. The fleet must be consolidated to carry out also a range of missions and tasks in support of the civil authorities.
- The expansion of the classified NATO network in the working environment of the MoD, General Staff of the Armed Forces, Service Commands and specific subordinate institutions, to improve communications effectiveness, benefit from the rich NATO archive, maintain continuity and fulfill NATO obligations with quality and in time. Communication, IT and security structures, will increase their efforts to finalize this project, as well as to prepare relevant operating procedures, based on NATO practices, to facilitate users' access to information, by adhering to the information security regulations;
- The development of Cyber Defense capabilities to ensure resilient information technology systems and national systems. The MoD and AFRA, in close cooperation with the United States will continue to improve their response capacities, to achieve a fully operational cyber defense capability;
- The strengthening of professional training remains essential to ensure the future of the AFRA with well-educated and trained personnel, as well as the cultivation of character and patriotism. The implementation of the 4-year academic cycle based on the West Point model is the result of this effort, which must be further improved in terms of infrastructure, human resources, curriculum and technology.
- Innovative and Technological Advancement should take precedence in the transformation and modernization of defense systems. This approach should be nurtured by using the opportunities offered by the new Innovation Centre;

- The continuous modernization of the Integrated Airspace and Maritime Surveillance System of the Republic of Albania should be an important and sustainable objective for the structures of the MoD and AFRA, through the improvement and maintenance of the systems and the increase of inter-institutional cooperation with the institutions and agencies of the country with interests in the air and at sea;
- Increased attention should be paid to the strengthening of the civil protection and preparedness system, as well as the implementation of projects in the framework of rehabilitation and prevention of natural disasters, for the effective management of natural and man-made disasters, as well as any other commitment to help the community. The operation of the Integrated System for the Management of Civil Emergencies, as part of the European Civil Protection Mechanism, is necessary, as is the improvement of satellite capacities in order to increase the quality of images for the beneficiary institutions;
- The management of the goods of the State Reserves and Materials (SRM) should continue, in order to be able to react immediately in the event of emergencies and natural disasters, by improving the legal framework guaranteeing the proper functioning of the structures, reviewing the structure and organization of the SRM, taking into account the needed personnel to guarantee the administrative process of the institution. Emphasis should be placed on improving the storage infrastructure for SRM supplies by increasing the security of the facilities in all regions of the country as well as reorganizing and consolidating of the logistical fleet of SRM used in case of emergencies and natural disasters.

5. Infrastructural Promotion and Development

Our country will be further strengthened as a stabilizing and constructive factor at regional level, through the removal of barriers and the construction of common infrastructure for the free and rapid movement of people, equipment, goods and capital. In this sense, and in the light of the development and implementation of NATO's regional plans, the structures of the MoD and AFRA should spare no effort in promoting Corridor VIII, as a security corridor linking Adriatic and Black Sea. The soon to be completed and operationalization of the Kuçova Air Base; the follow-up and development of the Porto Romano military project; the modernization of the Biza training area; the provision of storage capacities, armament, ammunition and material stocks to support the activities of NATO, the EU, but also strategic allies such as the USA, remain crucial for the future. Consequently, training and interoperability must be increased and improved, in particular through the Defender Europe series of military exercises, which, in addition to military preparation, also convey a strategic message.

6. Peace and Security Contribution

Albania will remain engaged in missions, operations and initiatives of NATO, the EU, the UN and zealous coalitions. This is an area in which our country has always been highly valued, as evidenced by its presence in various regions of the world, which makes Albania an exporter of security, stability and prosperity. Also, our military personnel around the world continue to consolidate the position and image of our country in the international arena, as an instrument to achieve political goals and to show the commitment and contribution of our representation in the global dimension.

7. Intelligence products improvement

Supporting decision-making with rapid and complete information on threats and risks is an ongoing and necessary requirement, especially in the current deteriorating security environment. Improving the quality of intelligence products should be the focus of intelligence and security structures. This should be done through cooperation with intelligence and security institutions inside and outside the country, modernizing collection and analysis capabilities, taking advantage of technology and the possibility of using artificial intelligence.

8. A hub for Defense and Security Cooperation

The successful implementation of many of the above objectives is closely linked to cooperation with our allies and partners. In this regard, the continuation and strengthening of defense and military cooperation bilaterally (in particular with Kosovo), with allies and strategic partners, as well as with the countries of the region, will remain our priority. In 2024, our country will become an important pole of regional security and strategic communication, leading important initiatives such as the US-A5 of the Adriatic Charter, the Balkan Chief of Defense, the organization of the Ministerial Meeting of the Southeast Defense Process (SEDM) and the 15th anniversary of Albania's membership in NATO. The focus in this direction is on taking full organizational measures and fulfilling the respective commitments.

CONCLUSION

This directive will be the compass to guide ideas, strategies and innovations and must be successfully implemented through the realization of priorities, projects and comprehensive processes, as well as the commitment of the structures of the MoD, GSAF and subordinate units. The monitoring of the 2024 Defense Directive will be carried out through periodic 6-month evaluations and the measurement of annual performance indicators for the activities included in the strategic objectives of the document.