

Mr. Chulev for Dnevnik: Macedonia is under threat of returnees from Syria, migrants and internal group



The security situation in the country is stable. However, we are facing several threats like the returnees from Syria and Iraq, then the migrants and with one internal threat in form of criminal-extremist groups who are not satisfied with their position in the society and who might destabilize the country due to their personal interests. This was stated by the Head of the Intelligence Agency, Mr. Nakje Chulev in the interview for “Dnevnik”.

He confirms the involvement of the foreign non-government organizations in the two violent attempts for migrants' entry into Macedonia. Mr. Chulev comments that the Agency is permanently monitoring the possibility that the foreign factors might misuse the violent protests in the political crisis for their personal goals.

Mr. Chulev, as Director of the Intelligence Agency, one of the institutions which are the pillars of the security in Macedonia, especially protecting it from external risks, how do you estimate the current security situation and are there any threats vindictive for the region and Macedonia?

– Currently, the security related conditions in the neighboring environment are relatively stable, but we monitor vigilantly all the threats and risks that might influence the security of the Republic of Macedonia. I would refer to the situation with terrorist fighters who are returnees from conflict regions in Syria and Iraq with origins in the Balkan countries and in Macedonia as the main risk. We monitor the situation with these individuals and the jeopardy they pose when they return in the region intending to commit violent acts in order to arise insecurity amid the population. That's why we have established deepened

and intensive cooperation with partner services in the region and broader in order to prevent the intentions of these individuals to violate the security situation.

The second threat that we are following closely is the increased influx of illegal migrants transiting through our territory. As you know, besides the humanitarian aspect related to the refugee crisis, the institutions act pursuant to security aspect as well, foremost in identification of the persons transiting through our territory, the possibility to abuse the migrant wave for transit of foreign terrorist fighters intending to commit attacks against targets throughout Europe, and in identification of smuggling networks assisting the illegal migration. I can conclude that regarding this threat, all institutions included in crisis management, have conveyed exceptional level of professionalism, coordination and conjoint cooperation regarding this threat. As result of such dedicated stance, Macedonia was the principal link that contributed to the closure of the so-called Balkan Route for migrant influx into EU and received tributes from our partners.

The third threat that we are observing is the jeopardy arousing from criminal and extremist groups, dissatisfied with their position in the society of the domicile countries. Intending to reach their own personal and criminal interests, they may destabilize the security conditions in their countries of origin and in our country. We share all information related to these security threats and risks obtained by the Agency with our colleagues in the Ministry of Interior, i.e. UBK and BJB and in the Ministry of Defense and the Macedonian Army as we have regular communication and coordination in this field.

You mentioned the migrants. We have witnessed two violent attempts of bigger groups trying to enter Macedonia after Balkan Route closure. Are there any chances for repeated attempts?

-Yes, on 14 March and on 10 April 2016, two big attempts for illegal entry of over 1500 migrants on our territory took place at our south border, in Gevgelija region. These persons are residing in the improvised camp in Idomeni which is not an official capacity for migrants accommodation in Greece. At the same time, it is a source of instability and a center where migrants are planned and organized to enter our territory illegally and violently. Well organized preparation acts done by foreign non-government organizations and volunteers in this camp preceded these two attempts. With posters and flyers, they called the migrants to enter forcefully our territory manipulating them that the Balkan Route is not closed in other countries along the corridor. The Agency informed in timely manner on the intentions of these persons and Macedonia succeeded to prevent their attempts for forceful entry and transit through our country, returning these persons back to the Greek territory. Doing so, our country congruously follows the policies of EU member countries related to Balkan Route closure. Unfortunately, the migrants acted extremely aggressively and injured many of our colleagues in the Ministry of Interior and in the Macedonian Army. They made material damages as well. Moreover, the incidents were misused by certain non-government organizations to present Macedonia in negative connotation.

Does the current political crisis, accompanied by the protests, influence the institutions capacities to handle the security situation?

– I, personally condemn each and every act of violence and public property destroying during democratic rights expression at gatherings and protests. In conditions when there are threats against the security and stability in the region and in the Republic of Macedonia, I think that the violence element at the protests draws increased presence of the Ministry of Interior personnel in conditions of declared emergency at northern and southern borders over refugee crisis and negatively influences on the capacities and efficiency to successfully fight external threats against Macedonia. We, as an institution, in compliance with our competences, monitor the situation due to the possibility that external factors might exploit the protests for their own goals and interests and violate the security in order to represent our country as unstable territory.

Increased cooperation with partner services

Do the current security challenges and the migrant crisis increase the interest of the services to cooperate with you?

-The Intelligence Agency continuously adopts and upgrades its own capacities to successfully handle the threats which are complex and dynamic and demand close international and regional cooperation. The Agency has fruitful and intensive cooperation with vast number of partner services collaborating successfully for years. The increased threats arousing from the migrant crisis, the process of radicalization and terrorism both regionally and globally have conditioned increased dynamics in the cooperation and information exchange with the partner services in order to support the international security related policies and prevent threats against the security and stability of our country and in the region.