



## INNOVATIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL SOCIETIES

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Interviewee: General Behar Selimi

Interviewer: Arthur Boutellis

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BOUTELLIS: Today is the 22<sup>nd</sup> of July 2008 and I am now sitting in Priština, Kosovo with General Behar Selimi who is the Assistant Commissioner for Border Police with the Kosovo Police and currently Acting Deputy Kosovo Police Service Commissioner. First, thank you for your time, and before we start the interview I'd like you to confirm that you've given your consent to the interview.

SELIMI: Yes.

BOUTELLIS: Without further ado, I'd like to start by asking you a little bit more about your personal background, the jobs you held before this position and how did you get involved into policing work?

SELIMI: *In 1984, I was a cadet at the police academy. That was in an old system in the former Yugoslavia and the police academy was in Kosovo in a small town, Vushtrri/Vučitrn. I did four years in the police academy. In that system you had to go four years, all the time to learn about internal affairs and police issues and after that to get the title police officer, nothing more. Maybe that was the idea of the communist system to have state police rather than police who were serving the community and they kept us for four years trying to build us up as people who were going to serve them and the political party rather than the community. They tried to clear our mind and to keep us out of our personality. However, I did that police academy 1984 to 1988.*

*I had one year and eight months experience in that kind of policing and that was the communist way of policing, so called or more state-oriented police, not community-oriented police service in that time.*

*In 1989, exactly 1990, we were terminated by the Serbian government because they wanted us to use our service in order to destroy the autonomy that Kosovo had at that time, because Kosovo was a federal unit and had self-determination without opportunity to govern by itself but it was in the Constitution. We as a people who are law enforcement didn't want to follow those political orders, which weren't legally—weren't even based on the Yugoslavian Constitution. Those orders have been against the Federal Constitution. You can imagine 1990, 1991, Yugoslavia was going down every day, being separated into single republics, indeed single countries.*

*From that time I organized, after I was terminated, I organized the labor union or so-called trade union, which was going to support those former police officers who were terminated. We had around 2000 officers at that time and that labor union had all of them. In order to take care of them, we dealt with social issues in the beginning. After that, when the resistance started, the political resistance was more dynamic and we started to act as shadow police in Kosovo. We operated only in a way it is not going to be a military confrontation with arms with Serbian Police Service here in Kosovo. We gathered information, intelligence information. We took care of our overall safety situation. We provided those political leaders with some information in order to make good decisions, in order to have Kosovo here where we are today. This was the beginning.*

*However, during that time, I was deputy to the leader of the trade union. In 1998, some military action started in Kosovo—war was declared. During the war I was active in the political level and the analytical level in the Kosovo mission in Albania. It was in Tirana. It was like an embassy accepted by the Albanian government but not fully recognized by the—it was understood that at the time,*

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*we were not even a recognized province. After the war, I again came back to my profession and I applied to become a police officer.*

BOUTELLIS: This was in 1999?

*SELIMI: Exactly. I am the second generation—second class. I knew democratic training for a new way of policing in 2000. We started in 1999. It was very short training for nine weeks. I did it in February 2000, six months as a traffic police officer. After that I applied in Prishtinë/Priština. I worked in Prizren as a traffic police officer. Prizren is a very good city; if you have time to visit it has a good countryside. I worked there for six months and after that I came to the main headquarters, the main police headquarters as a KPS Public Relations Officer. In 2001, I was appointed as spokesperson, the first KPS spokesperson. It was good being the first one. You will be liked more, even if you look bad or do not say well-articulated things.*

*In 2003, I became Lieutenant Colonel. I went in the regular process of being interviewed, doing tests and so on and so forth. I became the head of the division. It was the division for government—it is for VIP protection and vital facility buildings protection. It is like the Marshall's Service in the US or protective service. I became a commander of that division. In 2004, I became the head of administrative services in the colonel rank, and after that Deputy Commissioner for Administration, as you have heard from your earlier interview, because in his time I was Deputy for Administration. And administration in our concept includes IT, budget issues, procurement issues, training issues, police academy, and logistical issues. All of those disciplines—or internal affairs, audit and control, selection, recruitment—all those things were under my responsibility, a huge responsibility. In November 2007, last year, I was appointed as Assistant Police Commissioner for Border Police.*

*By education, I am a lawyer; I did a faculty of law. I am now doing Master's topic on national safety policy of the Republic of Kosovo. I am married and I have two children, a son and a daughter. I did some further education; I was in Germany for 15 weeks at the George Marshall Center College for International and Security Relationships. I also did training in Florida, in Jacksonville, north Florida. It is IPTM, Institute of Police Technology and Management. You can see that certificate, Institute of Police Technology and Management. I was there in 2002. I did some training on community-related issues. Too long, for a young guy, too long.*

BOUTELLIS: When you decided to apply for the new KPS, because the Kosovo Police Service was formally created in 1999—?

*SELIMI: Yes, the date was 6 September 1999 when the first class started training. We use that date as the establishment, historically.*

BOUTELLIS: When you applied at the time, everybody applies at the entering level?

*SELIMI: In that time.*

BOUTELLIS: Regardless of your past?

*SELIMI: I remember there were 20,000 applications. Among them we had former police officers, most of them were former KLA, Kosovo Liberation Army officers, and regular citizens. All of us were put in the same procedures, the same—I mean, in*

*the beginning, and this is maybe good for your research, it was—you will have some credit beforehand.*

*For example, if you, like me, were a police officer, you would get two scores or three scores. I don't know exactly but I had some credit because I was a police officer. It depends on your experience. My colleagues, some generals here, we used to be twenty years—they had more credits. I don't know what criteria they used to put those scores, but I had some credits.*

*If you were with faculty education, you did faculty—you had a bachelor's—you get additional scores. Before you do testing—with a written test, you do graded test—you do an oral interview. Then they add on the end of the process those scores. They comprised the list of best qualified. All of those scores are put in there and you will see if you were among those 500, for example, or 100, who are going to go in the police academy. This was in the first five generations.*

*After this someone from the US came here as a Deputy Commissioner and he changed it. He wanted each and everybody equal, without any kind of credit, without having in mind their background, professional background, whatsoever. This was in the second clause, which means in 2002 we changed this. But in the beginning when I was applying, I had some credit because I had a police education and bachelor's degree.*

BOUTELLIS: Was there any promotional system in place at the time? This system of credits, was it determining your potential advancement within the KPS? When were the first promotions made in the KPS?

SELIMI: *The first promotions had been made in 2001 and I was among those who were the first promoted people. We had two parallel processes. One was for the appointment process and the other was for promotion. Maybe I will try to clarify what I'm trying to say. For the senior—for example, I was promoted from police officer to lieutenant colonel. They did some interviews with us, but we didn't advance in a normal procedure. I understood this because they were in a rush; they needed us as soon as possible. Now, let's see who is—they put some of us who were educated—now, they took into consideration our education, our experience, our charisma, and how popular we were.*

BOUTELLIS: In the Kosovo community?

SELIMI: *Yes, yes, exactly. Our success in this service, not in the former service. They put us through three weeks' training. Our supervisors, Americans, French, German, some were from India, they worked with us and they recommended some of us and they comprised a list of the people. They are the potential leaders. They sent us to the police academy for three weeks.*

BOUTELLIS: Was it senior management training?

SELIMI: *Yes, senior management training. They allotted us to this through that. Six IPOs, International Police Officers, were with us all day—watching us, observing us.*

BOUTELLIS: How many were selected from that pool?

SELIMI: *At that time, we had been six from 45 or 50 who were on the list. Indeed, 100, because they repeated. They got more potential leaders, more potential leaders. In the beginning we were five lieutenant colonels and one colonel. I was proud*

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*through the results because at the end of the process they did an interview. They asked you about your vision, about strategy, about management skills. It was excellent. I was proud because at the end of it I was the youngest one in the group; I was among my former chiefs in the former service. I was a little bit afraid that they could be more experienced, more educated, but in the new way of policing I saw that they are really very, very young. They are good in the old way of policing. In the old way of policing nobody could say to police: "no." It was easy to be a good manager at that time—just say "yes" to the political party, the Communist political party, and you will be a manager. Now, in a democracy, you need to work hard every day in order to prove yourself that you are a manager or you are a leader. This was one process.*

*Another one was a regular one. The regular one was this: open vacancy for sergeants. Sergeant is the first rank in the police here. Each and everybody were eligible to apply. Now they will do a pre-selection or preliminary selection. They will go through some practitioners, some people who yesterday used to be graduated. They were eliminated because yesterday they started—today they're asking to be sergeants.*

*People with about six months' experience, they applied. That was among maybe 1000 at that time, 2001. Eight hundred is possible. Let's say 80% of them applied and we have only 42 sergeants at the end of the process. That process was this. They apply, and then they are going to give you a test with 150 questions. You have to respond to those questions. Those tests were sent to the scanner, not a human being, physically.*

BOUTELLIS: It was multiple choice?

SELIMI: *Exactly, multiple choice. They send it through a scanner. We had no opportunity to influence that. That—for us in Kosovo—was something very, very modern, something never seen before. Those who passed with 75% were eligible to be interviewed orally. Now they interview you orally, they didn't score you. Then after that both results are going to be comprised. Recommendations will be respected, but without scores, it will just be "I recommend" or "not recommend." They will bring the best-qualified list.*

*Now they can see the structure. Do we need sergeants? Yes, whoever's overall score is over 75% is eligible for one year. If you did, after three months for example, ask for additional sergeants, there was no need for additional processes. Those people who are on the pending list or waiting list were eligible to be promoted—they could be. This was to save money; this was to save time and to save resources.*

*After that they had the opportunity to apply for lieutenant, captain, major. To the major rank was the regular process. The major rank and above it is appointment.*

BOUTELLIS: So that is approximately how many in the current police force, the top three ranks?

SELIMI: *I have no figures.*

BOUTELLIS: Approximately?

SELIMI: *I know that we are five generals. I know that we are around 14 colonels; colonels are the second ranked officers. I am not sure if I am exact but it is approximately.*

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*About 24 majors, there are around 100 captains because captains are dealing with stations. Those are the first line managers. We have got in the force—7335. We have got in our structure, the span of control based on the management books, one supervisor for five to seven officers. We respected that span of control. We think that somebody can supervise five to seven people. Somebody smart can supervise more than that, but it is book-oriented management.*

BOUTELLIS: So specifically in the Kosovo case—first, in 1999, the international community came with an executive mandate so the UN was in charge of policing. However, their mandate was to help to build the Kosovo Police Service. Can you walk us through maybe some key stages in the process of transition and benchmark in terms of achievements of the KP?

SELIMI: *Yes. The UNMIK (United Nations Mission in Kosovo) police had the mandate to take care of law and order in Kosovo. They were mandated to enforce the law. The second objective and mandate was to establish the KPS in that time. Early, in the beginning, the IPOs individually as an organization—it was okay. They had a good policy. They prepared the transition plan, three-year transition plan.*

*I remember in 2001 we had a transition plan, a strategic plan, because it was three to five years. They were thinking that for three to five years we would be a fully responsible and sustainable organization. But individually, they didn't trust people and we had no local ownership in that strategy. This was very lacking, I think. Maybe they didn't find the individuals who had a strategic way of thinking or visions. Maybe Kosovars, because of a lot of risk factors for IPOs, sometimes they estimated them as people who are coming with all knowledge that we have in the world, which is not true. Among the IPOs, there are a lot of people who are not competent even to do a police job. Maybe there are good reasons—maybe we can justify it because in each mission you don't have all the professionals that you need, but this was a weakness. We had no ownership in that strategy.*

*However, the establishment of a structure was done by the Deputy Commissioner for Development of KPS. It was almost the responsibility of American police officers. In those positions, the police academy was led by an American guy.*

BOUTELLIS: Under the OSCE (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe)?

SELIMI: *Yes, the OSCE.*

BOUTELLIS: Steve Bennett?

SELIMI: *Exactly, Steve Bennett. He worked hard. I am calling him Father Founder of the training system in Kosovo because he did it. He worked hard. In the KPS Director position was an American guy. In the UNMIK organization, we had KPS organization and that organization was led with executive authority by an American. In the Deputy Commissioner's Position for Development, there was another American guy. This led us to have today almost a similar organization of a law enforcement agency in the United States, in the UK in some areas, and in some areas it is similar to the Germans. This means, for your research, it is obvious that people individually are going to push their style of policing or their way of thinking if they are in a position in which they can move things.*

*Now it depends if you are from what country. If you are from Kosovo and you are in Liberia, nobody is going to listen to you in order to prepare a police structure.*

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*But if you are from the United States or from France or from Germany, they will listen to you. This means that you have opportunity to positively influence their structure. We lost track of how to build the Kosovo Police with its identity, its own identity with its culture and mentality. We cannot be, never, at least not immediately, German police. Our nation is not a German nation, yet with their way of thinking with their manner—at least, we have no infrastructure.*

*If I ask people not to park illegally, as a municipality we should provide them with a parking space, a legal parking space. They are not parking in legal parking spaces. There is not a legal parking space and somewhere I have to park because I have got a right to have a car. I bought the car, I need to have good roads, and I need to have a good parking space. As a police officer, if I punish people every day, but on the other side, the government is not offering infrastructure to implement the law, you are asking me to do something for which we have no infrastructure. But there is a law, okay. But the law should respect the reality.*

*I tried to somehow—but we are in a good way. We are quickly reaching some standards and I am happy with this in comparison with Bosnia, Sierra Leone or Liberia. Kosovo is far away—I was a little happy when I heard you were—it looked like you were in Europe because you are in Europe. It is a long way to go but we are in a good way.*

BOUTELLIS: After the two to five year transition plan that had been drafted, the benchmark was reached in 2004, 2005, that was—.

SELIMI: *Yes, in 2004 it was an achievement: the KPS Admin pillar. I hope that in the coming days we will provide you with structure and you will see what the KPS admin pillar is and you will have more opportunity to explain it afterwards. At the end of 2003, we started the process of transition on the pillar level. Until that we achieved to transition 80% of the police stations. We achieved to transition two regions in 2004.*

BOUTELLIS: So transition, just to clarify, it is from the UNMIK officer being the head of a police station then it becomes a KPS who heads the police station?

SELIMI: *Yes, monitored by IPOs (International Police Officers).*

BOUTELLIS: Yes. Were they in a monitoring and advising position?

SELIMI: *Exactly.*

BOUTELLIS: They're not in a decision-making—.

SELIMI: *Right. Not decision-making, at the station level.*

BOUTELLIS: So 80% of police stations by 2004 already transitioned.

SELIMI: *Yes, in a police station, exactly. In 2004 also, the entire admin pillar and authority was transitioned. I'm proud of the admin pillar because I was leading that process. I thought at that time an administration transition would be done yearly. Why? Because we're used to dealing with Kosovo law. For budget, for example, we used to do—in the administration you are dealing with strategic issues. You have a business plan and you have to implement that business plan based on the local regulations. Why they should have somebody from the internationals*

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*to—they need additional time to listen, to learn those laws, financial law. More than that you are responsible for the money that you are spending because when I say administration, budget was the greatest headache-maker for me. I relate everything with money there.*

*I even asked for suggestions. Whenever we will have a mission in the future, the administration side of the service, leave to the locals. Monitor them, but leave them because they are responsible, they are morally responsible for what they are doing. And they will sustain because in administration you are dealing with a strategic plan in two to five years.*

*Nobody from the UNMIK police had such an opportunity to be with the mission all times for two to five years. They were here for six months, they would go and then they leave the business plan on half of the road. We are getting another IPO who is starting from the beginning to do another project, another business plan. Because of that, in 2004 we did that. I was very persistent and I achieved to get that. At that time I got a nickname, like Apache Helicopter. You know Apache Helicopters are the best helicopters now in the United States military.*

*In 2005 we continued to do a transition of the regional commands. We have six regional commands in Kosovo. You have 32 police stations and six regional commands. Those police stations are related to, for example, you have Prishtinë/Priština region and you have four stations: Glogovac/Glogovac, Podujevë/Podujevo, Lipjan/Lipljan and two in Prishtinë/Priština station. Those regions, except Mitrovica region, those regions were transitioned in 2005 and 2006. Now Mitrovica is still not transitioned yet. At the station level, yes, in the regional level it is the international officer who has executive power. He makes the decisions for those officers because of the sensitivity, because of minorities in the north, and because of problems that they have with Mitrovica.*

*On the strategic level, in the main headquarters—except administration, which is as I told you from 2004—.*

BOUTELLIS: Already transitioned.

SELIMI: *In operations there is still an IPO Deputy Commissioner who has executive authority. With me at the border, which is more difficult for me because I used to be independent and now I have an IPO who has executive authority to make a decision and I have to follow. In the crime pillar, it is the same situation, which means that the most senior officers are still under executive power from UNMIK police. It depends if you are skillful enough you will take the decision by itself and some measurements, but you will continue to run the business. But currently, and we are speaking about the Commissioner's office, he is an international. He has a KPS Deputy Community, but the Commissioner's position has not transitioned. He is still decision maker, and executive authority arises with him. And all heads of departments are still with executive authority. Maybe—.*

BOUTELLIS: Is there a timeline for transitioning of these key position operations?

SELIMI: No.

BOUTELLIS: Has the Declaration of Independence made any difference at this level?

SELIMI: *Practically, yes. We are feeling more powerful and we are making more decisions without asking them. But in a formal sense, we are not allowed,*

*because as a police officer you need a paper to do something for authorization. But practically, yes. Regarding deadlines, in the American's time, when I say this I mean in the Deputy Commissioner's time, there was a deadline for transition. In 2006, what happened was we got a directorate for transition, something like that. We had a Department for Transition comprised of UNMIK police. What they do—they go somewhere and they say, "Okay, we would like to do a transition of the operations center. They will do some evaluation and they will recommend a transition or not. This means there are no deadlines, but it depends on their estimation. It is the UNMIK police department. It is one KPS officer with them and it is a weakness, because that department should be half locals and half internationals in order to have a smooth transition.*

*With IPOs, if Ban Ki-moon is not going to say to move from Kosovo, some IPOs will be here forever—good salary, good countryside, good value. Everything is good for some people here. Because of that, it depends if they will find out something—imagine, they told me for one border crossing point it is not ready for transition yet. I said why? Because there is no Internet there. Is it necessary to have Internet? Give me some instructions from Brussels's or Washington, D.C. Where is it a rule that at a border crossing point it is necessary to have Internet? How did my fathers protected the borders without Internet? Do I have a cell phone? Yes. Do I have a radio communication system? Yes. Do I have another means of communication? Yes, intranet. Why? That tells me that they sometimes just want—you're not ready for transition, you didn't grow up enough and so on and so forth.*

**BOUTELLIS:** So what are the major challenges and the priorities as you see both in terms of the KP but also in terms of this relationship with the IPO, the international community?

**SELIMI:** *I am not thinking any more about challenges with the United Nations police. They are just at the end of the mission. There may be, some of them—somehow—a few of them will be with the new European police mission in Kosovo.*

**BOUTELLIS:** EULEX (European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo).

**SELIMI:** *EULEX, but with them I think they will end in a good way, they will be respected for what they did because it is obvious that they did a great job; they established a service. We have a structure in place, and we have the people in place. Okay, it was a joint effort with OSCE and other international organizations, but we had a good structure in place and we had resources in place. Now we need to work more on capacity building, on developing our capacities inside of the service.*

*With EULEX I don't see any problems. They have a clear mandate. They will advise, they will mentor and sometimes they will correct our decisions if wrong in relation to EU standards. But with EULEX, the mandate is very clear and varies with their head of the mission. They know exactly they are coming to the Republic of Kosovo. But I don't see challenges regarding the relationship with EULEX. It is an excellent beginning with them that I see.*

*Yesterday I told them, and maybe this is good to emphasize, I told them, we know a lot of things in Kosovo. We are a very capable police service because we have received a lot of training; we have got a lot of experience, different experiences. We can serve this nation or people better than anybody in Europe or the US. What we don't know is the road to the EU. Because of that, Mr. EULEX—I am making jokes sometimes with them in order to get more flexible*

*relations—I told them, Mr. EULEX, what we don't know, we don't know the road to EU. The EU is destiny for KPS or for KP now, destiny is INTERPOL and EUROPOL. EUROPOL is the police in Europe, a police organization.*

*Your job is to lead us in order to get there, and we will follow you. It is maybe like a philosophy, but this is a station, and we have all the resources in place. We have got a lot of training. We need more specialization and this is a challenge. More specialization in organized crime fighting. More specialization in the use of technology. More training on management and leadership. I believe in strong leadership, but I think that still, our lack of leaders is a problem. It is a challenge that it is to be written in your research. It is a possibility to be under the pressure of politics or influenced by politics. We are a very small country—even in the United States, the Chiefs of Police are under political pressure—but here in the western Balkans—.*

BOUTELLIS: They're nominated.

SELIMI: *Yes, because of that sometimes they are doing phone calls, "Hey Chief, what are you doing? Do you know you have an additional mandate—" But here in the western Balkans opportunities are more—and the influence can be worse. Opportunities are—they will ask for private reasons, not for state reasons or community reasons. This is a challenge. The possibility to be, how can I say it, losing the professional autonomy.*

BOUTELLIS: To be influenced by members of government.

SELIMI: *Exactly, that is a challenge. To me, KP or KPS is the best story; it is the most corruption-free organization in southeastern Europe. My brother is living in Holland, the Dutch. He has got citizenship. He's a Dutch guy. He is not any more Kosovo/Albanian. He came from the Holland last night, through Slovenia. They asked for money from him. In Croatia they asked for money. In Montenegro they asked for money. However, my police officers at the border: "Welcome sir, you need a visa for this to stay here." They didn't know because his surname is not my surname. I like this. It is not only in this case, but in a lot of cases.*

*Another challenge is salary—low salary, very low salary. They have no social insurance, and they have no health insurance. But I hope that government, our new government, we are in a country that will think somehow to fix this. What can we do? We can do this again, it will be—?*

BOUTELLIS: The next ten days.

SELIMI: *You have my business card, and I have your business card—no need for protocol and no need for bureaucracy. We can continue this again.*

BOUTELLIS: That would be wonderful. Thank you for your time.