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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 07 PRISTINA 000015

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DEPT FOR EUR, EUR/SCE, DRL, INL, AND S/WCI, NSC FOR BRAUN,  
USUN FOR DREW SCHUFLETOWSKI, USOSCE FOR STEVE STEGER, OPDAT  
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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [UNMIK](#) [KV](#)

SUBJECT: KOSOVO: WHO'S WHO IN THE NEW GOVERNMENT

Classified By: COM TINA KAIDANOW FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

¶1. (U) On January 9 the Kosovo Assembly approved the following slate of ministers of Kosovo's new government coming out of the November 17, 2007 central elections (see bios at para 2; septels report January 9 Assembly action; PM Thaci bio; and Assembly Speaker Krasniqi bio):

Prime Minister Hashim Thaci (Democratic Party of Kosovo - PDK)

Deputy Prime Minister Hajredin Kuci (PDK)

Deputy Prime Minister Rame Manaj (Democratic League of Kosovo - LDK)

Agriculture - Minister Idriz Vehapi (PDK)  
- Deputy Minister Sule Sylanaj (PDK)

Culture, Youth, and Sports - Minister Skender Hyseni (LDK)  
- Deputy Minister Lirije Kajtazi (LDK)

Economy & Finance - Minister Ahmet Shala (PDK)  
- Deputy Minister Bedri Hamza (PDK)

Education, Science, and Technology - Minister Enver Hoxhaj (PDK)  
- Deputy Minister Agim Hyseni (PDK)

Energy and Mining - Minister Justina Pula-Shiroka (PDK)  
- Deputy Minister Blerim Rexhaj (PDK)

Environment & Spatial Planning - Minister Mahir Yagcilar (Kosovo Turk  
Democratic Party - KDTP)  
- Deputy Minister Emin Krasniqi (PDK)

Health - Minister Alush Gashi (LDK)  
- Deputy Minister Mubera Mustafa (LDK)

Internal Affairs - Minister Zenum Pajaziti (PDK)  
- Deputy Minister Fatmir Xhelili (PDK)

Justice - Minister Nekibe Kelmendi (LDK)

- Deputy Minister Arsim Janova (LDK)

Labor and Social Welfare - Minister Nenad Rasic (Independent Liberal

Party - SLS)  
- Deputy Minister (TBD)

Local Government - Minister Sadri Ferati (LDK)  
- Deputy Minister Shpend Terdeva (LDK)

Public Services - Minister Arsim Bajrami (PDK)  
- Deputy Minister Rifat Blakaj (PDK)

Returns & Communities - Minister Bojan Stankovic (SLS)  
- Deputy Minister (TBD)

Trade & Industry - Minister Lutfi Zharku (LDK)  
- Deputy Minister Naser Osmani (LDK)

Transport & Telecomm - Minister Fatmir Limaj (PDK)  
- Deputy Minister Adem Grabovci (PDK)

12. (C) Bios of PM Thaci's cabinet:

HAJREDIN KUCI (PDK), DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER

Hajredin Kuci, a PDK vice president, was born on January 2, 1971, in Peja/Pec. A graduate of a police high school and an active police officer in 1989, Kuci went on to study law at the University of Pristina and attained a doctoral degree in international law. He entered political prominence following his election as PDK vice president in October 1999 and his influence in the party has been on the rise since. In

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conjunction with party activity, he also served as vice rector of the University of Pristina beginning in 2000. Kuci was elected to the Kosovo Assembly in both the 2001 and 2004 central elections. He chaired the Assembly Committee on Education, Science and Technology during 2002-2004, and the Assembly Committee on Rules of Procedure after the 2004 elections. He has been re-elected as vice president of the party in all party elections since 1999, with the last time being 2006. Kuci lost his position as vice rector in July 2005 after the intervention of the Kosovo Government to eliminate political control over the university. Since mid-2006 he has headed the PDK's good governance cabinet originally headed by Thaci. Kuci unsuccessfully ran in the 2007 election for mayor of Peja/Pec. He currently teaches at the Faculty of Law and the Department of Political Sciences at the University of Pristina. Kuci has also played an important coordinating role for the commission drafting Kosovo's first constitution and also ably chaired the ad-hoc group dealing with Kosovo's future symbols. Kuci is married with two children. He is well and favorably known to USOP. He speaks English.

RAME MANAJ (LDK), DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER

Rame Manaj, LDK secretary-general, was born on July 24, 1954, in the village of Gllareve near Klina. He holds a bachelor's degree in law from the University of Pristina. Manaj joined the LDK in 1990 and for five years headed one of its Klina sub-branches. As of 1995, he served as member of the Klina branch presidency. He was elected to the municipal assembly of Klina in the 2000 elections and was slated to head its Judicial Affairs Committee. Following the still-unresolved murder of the municipal president, Ismet Rraci, in April 2001, he was chosen to take over Rraci's municipal post. Manaj's mayoral service and closeness to LDK Vice President Kole Berisha led to his appointment to the LDK central presidency in the party assembly of 2004. The newly-elected president of Kosovo Fatmir Sejdiu appointed Manaj as his political advisor in February 2006, but Manaj soon switched to the duty of chief political advisor to the speaker of the Kosovo Assembly, Kole Berisha, in March 2006. His steadfast

allegiance to Sejdiu and Berisha led to his election as LDK secretary-general following its December 2006 party assembly.

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He was elected to the Kosovo Assembly in the 2007 general elections.

Manaj's son, brother and three other close relatives are among the 132 missing people from the municipality of Klina during the 1998-99 conflict, which may explain his early resistance to the issue of Serb returns there, though he has subsequently been more helpful. Manaj worked as director of administration at a local bauxite mine from 1982 to 1990. USOP has a good relationship with Manaj. Manaj does not speak English.

IDRIZ VEHAPI (PDK), AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY & RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Idriz Vehapi was born on December 15, 1964, in the village of Zatriq near Rahovec. He holds a bachelor's degree in biology from the University of Pristina. He has spent his professional career at the University of Pristina, and is currently assistant professor of microbiology at the department of biology at the Faculty of Mathematical and Natural Sciences of the University of Pristina. He also taught at the Medical School and the Faculty of Agriculture. Previously unengaged in politics, Vehapi made his first steps in the political world this year when he competed in the 2007 general elections but failed to be elected to the Kosovo Assembly. Vehapi is not known to USOP.

SKENDER HYSENI (LDK), CULTURE, YOUTH AND SPORTS

Skender Hyseni, a member of the LDK presidency and chief political advisor to the president of Kosovo, was born on February 15, 1955, in Podujevo. He holds a bachelor's degree in English language and literature from the University of Pristina. He began his political involvement in the 1990s as

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an interpreter for the late President of Kosovo, Ibrahim Rugova. His role evolved after the conflict into one of special assistant/senior adviser and he became a key figure in Rugova's inner circle, which gave him wider influence within the party. He became a member of the LDK General Council in 2002 but avoided public involvement in party affairs. Following the death of former President Rugova in January 2006, the new president of Kosovo, Fatmir Sejdiu, designated Hyseni as his chief political adviser. Hyseni has more recently made efforts to advance his political profile and following his election to the party presidency in December 2006, he beat LDK presidency member Sabri Hamiti in the race for the party's foreign affairs portfolio. He was elected to the Kosovo Assembly in the 2007 general elections and has also served as spokesman for the Unity Team. Hyseni is married with four children. He is a key interlocutor of USOP and speaks English.

AHMET SHALA (PDK), FINANCE AND ECONOMY

Ahmet Shala, deputy managing director of the Kosovo Trust Agency (KTA), was born on March 27, 1961, in the village of Pantine near Vushtrri. He holds a doctoral degree in economics from the University of Pristina. He started his professional career in the Trepca mining complex in 1985 and worked there until the expulsion of Albanian workers by Serbian authorities in 1989. Thereafter, he was executive manager of a private company from 1990 to 1994 and also started an English teaching school in Pristina in 1994. In 1995, he began teaching statistics and economic modeling at the Faculty of Economics of the University of Pristina. After the conflict, he served as economic advisor with UNMIK Pillar IV from 1999-2000. He began his involvement with the PDK in 2000 and as a PDK representative, served as co-head of the Department of Trade and Industry in the joint UNMIK-Kosovo administrative structures from 2000-2002. Shala

joined the KTA at its inception in 2002 in the capacity of international expert (as an Albanian citizen) and has served as deputy managing director for socially-owned enterprises. He continues to teach statistics part-time at the Faculty of Economics at the University of Pristina. Shala is married with four children. Shala is well and favorably known to USOP and has been a key USAID interlocutor. He speaks English.

ENVER HOXHAJ (PDK), EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Enver Hoxhaj, a member of the PDK presidency, was born on October 4, 1969, in Prizren. He holds a bachelor's degree in history from the University of Pristina and a doctoral degree in history from the University of Vienna. During his studies in Austria in the late 1990s he worked as a human rights researcher at the University of Vienna. He returned to Kosovo after the conflict to work as regional manager of Austria's World University Service. He emerged on the public scene as a political commentator for the media and gradually acquired a reputation as a political analyst. He helped found the local think-tank the Kosovar Research and Documentation Institute in January 2003 and served as its executive director. During 2004 Hoxhaj attempted to create a new political party that would unite previously independent intellectuals, but failing to marshal enough support, he decided to join the PDK. He was elected to the Kosovo Assembly in the 2004 general elections and was subsequently chosen to chair the Committee for Education, Science, Technology, Culture, Youth and Sports. He was elected to the PDK party presidency after its assembly of 2005 and appointed secretary for public relations. Hoxhaj has also served as

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head of the department of education, science and technology in the PDK's good governance cabinet. Hoxhaj is well and favorably known to USOP. He is married with two children. He speaks English.

JUSTINA PULA-SHIROKA (PDK), ENERGY AND MINING

Justina Pula-Shiroka, birth date unknown, is an economic expert at the PDK, and was born in Pristina. She received

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her bachelor's degree in economics from the University of Pristina in 1976. She holds a master's degree in economics in the University of Zagreb and doctoral degree from the University of Pristina. She is currently a tenured professor at the Faculty of Economics at the University of Pristina and also chairperson of the board of the Kosovo Civil Society Foundation, a small local NGO. She taught at the University of Tetovo as well as at several private universities in Kosovo. She is a regional board member for the World Learning Star Network. Previously unengaged in politics, Pula joined the PDK on October 7, 2007, as part of a group of experts Thaci promoted and appointed as his advisers. She has attended numerous trainings and participated in various conferences in recent years. Pula-Shiroka is married. She is not known to USOP. She speaks English.

MAHIR YAGCILAR (KDTP), ENVIRONMENT AND SPATIAL PLANNING

Mahir Yagcilar, president of the Kosovo Turk Democratic Party (KDTP), was born on May 6, 1961, in Prizren. He holds a bachelor's degree in road transportation from the University of Belgrade. Yagcilar became the chief representative of the Turkish minority in Kosovo after becoming president of the Kosovo Turk Democratic Party (KDTP) in 2000. He served in the joint UNMIK-Kosovo Transitional Council during 2000-2001. He was elected to the Kosovo Assembly in the 2001, 2004 and 2007 general elections. He has been the leader of the Six Plus assembly caucus (now known as the Seven Plus in the current Assembly), comprising the Turkish and Bosniak minorities, from 2004-2007. In addition to his political

activity, he has served as director of the bus station in Prizren in 2001. Yagcilar speaks Turkish, Serbian and Albanian, and is married with two children. He is well and favorably known to USOP. He does not speak English.

ALUSH GASHI (LDK), HEALTH

Alush Gashi, former head of the LDK caucus at the Kosovo Assembly, was born on October 4, 1950, in the village of Prigoda near Istog/Istok. He holds a doctoral degree in anatomy and has taught at the Medical Faculty of the University of Pristina. He began his political career in 1990 as a foreign affairs adviser to late President Rugova. He became a member of the presidency only in 1998, and assumed the party's foreign affairs portfolio. He was elected to the Kosovo Assembly in the 2001 general elections and served as deputy head of the LDK Assembly caucus. He became LDK caucus head at the Kosovo Assembly after the 2004 general elections. Following the death of President Rugova in January 2006, he was unsuccessful in securing enough support to become president of Kosovo. After this setback, he resorted to obstructionism, especially with regard to efforts at passing standards-related legislation in the Kosovo Assembly. He suffered another setback after a failed attempt to win the party presidency with the backing of the Rugova family as a purported uniting figure who would avert the party's splintering into Sejdiu and Daci factions. As a result, Gashi lost his place in the party central presidency, did not make it even to the general council, and his situation in the party was considered rather precarious. But his strong showing in the 2007 general election, when he came in sixth in the LDK list of elected assembly members, confirmed his staying power in Kosovo politics. As a result of his long involvement in foreign affairs, he has many contacts in the international community. He is married with two children. He speaks English.

ZENUN PAJAZITI (PDK), INTERNAL AFFAIRS

Zenun Pajaziti, a member of the PDK Steering Council, was born on September 12, 1966, in the village of Policke near Gjilan. He holds a bachelor's degree in civil engineering from the University of Pristina. He began his political activity in the LDK Youth Forum where he served initially as Gjilan branch leader. He then moved to Pristina where he served as vice president and later president of the LDK Youth

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Forum from 1994 to 1997. He left the LDK in March 1998 as part of the so-called political prisoners faction to which he belonged through his family association with several renowned political prisoners in Kosovo. After the conflict, Pajaziti joined the PDK and served as co-head of the Department of Sport in the joint UNMIK-Kosovo administrative structures from 2000-2001. Although a member of the PDK Steering Council, he has not had a political post within the party or outside. He was most influential in 2004, when he served in the cabinet of former Prime Minister Bajram Rexhepi as standards coordinator and liaison with UNMIK. In this capacity, he was well respected for his constructiveness and cooperative attitude. Pajaziti is not well known to USOP. He is married and speaks English.

NEKIBE KELMENDI (LDK), JUSTICE

Nekibe Kelmendi, an LDK vice president, was born on May 11, 1944, in Peja/Pec. She holds a bachelor's degree in law from the University of Pristina. She was among the LDK founders in 1989 and a member of the first presidency. She left active politics in 1991, but returned to the party presidency in March 1998 and assumed the post of secretary general. At the beginning of the NATO bombing campaign in March 1999, Serbian security forces killed her husband Bajram Kelmendi, the most renowned defense attorney in Kosovo, and her two sons. After the conflict, she co-headed the Department of Justice within the joint UNMIK-Kosovo administrative structures. This was a

somewhat stormy relationship, as Kelmendi clashed often with UNMIK over what she perceived as interference in the justice system. She resigned as secretary-general of LDK in April 2002, reportedly dissatisfied with late President Rugova's attitude towards her, and resumed private practice. She was elected to the Kosovo Assembly in both the 2001 and 2004 general elections as number three on the LDK's list of candidates and chaired the Assembly Committee on Public Services, Local Administration and Media. She returned to active party politics in 2006 and was elected vice president following the December 2006 party assembly. Kelmendi came in third among the LDK-elected candidates to the Kosovo Assembly in the 2007 general elections, the first time politicians were subject to open balloting. Stoicism in the face of her personal tragedy and her dignified demeanor has made Kelmendi a symbol of strength and courage and a highly respected public figure. USOP has excellent relations with Kelmendi. She is widowed with one daughter. She does not speak English.

#### NENAD RASIC (SLS), LABOR AND SOCIAL WELFARE

Nenad Rasic, a member of the Independent Liberal Party (SLS), was born on July 8, 1973, in Pristina. He holds a bachelor's degree in law from the University of Kragujevac, Serbia. After the conflict he worked as translator with UNMIK and KFOR. Previously not engaged in politics, he began his political career in 2007 when he helped found the Independent Liberal Party (SLS), a party that aspires to be an authentic political voice of Kosovo Serbs. Unconfirmed reports suggest his membership in the Serbian police structures before the 1998-1999 conflict. Apart from Serbian and English, Rasic speaks basic Albanian and Russian. Rasic is not well known to USOP; we have far more contact with SLS President Slobodan Petrovic, SLS Vice President Bojan Stankovic and SLS Secretary General Petar Miletic. Rasic is married.

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#### LUTFI ZHARKU (LDK), LOCAL GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION

Lutfi Zharku, a member of the LDK presidency, was born on November 19, 1962, in Kacanik. He holds a bachelor's degree in economics from the University of Pristina. Formerly a low-profile official of the LDK Kacanik branch, he began his political ascension after being elected to the Kosovo Assembly in the 2004 general elections. His service as member of the assembly has been generally uneventful. He sided strongly with Kosovo President Fatmir Sejdiu during the LDK's internal turmoil that followed the death of former Kosovo President Ibrahim Rugova and was elected to the LDK

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presidency following the party assembly of December 2006. He has spent most of his professional career in the cement factory in Hani i Elezit where he recently served as director of sales and marketing. Zharku is not well known to USOP. He is married with three children. He speaks some English.

#### ARSIM BAJRAMI (PDK), PUBLIC SERVICES

Arsim Bajrami, a member of the PDK presidency, was born on February 19, 1960, in the village of Medvec near Lipjan/Lipljan. He holds a doctoral degree in constitutional law and teaches at the Faculty of Law and the Department of Political Sciences at the University of Pristina. A low-profile LDK activist in the 1990s, he switched his political allegiance to the insurgent KLA in 1999 and entered primetime politics as deputy minister in the KLA-directed PGOK. He joined the PDK in October 1999 and was elected vice president in May 2000, reflecting the party's intention to create a more intellectual image for the PDK. At the same time, he served as vice rector of the University of Pristina. He represented the PDK on the Joint Working Group that drafted the Constitutional Framework in 2001. He was elected to the Kosovo Assembly as number two on the PDK's list of candidates

in both the 2001 and 2004 general elections. He chaired the Assembly Committee on Judicial, Legislative and Constitutional Framework Matters from 2002-2004. Bajrami resigned as party vice president and member of the Kosovo Assembly in December 2004 to become rector of the University of Pristina, an appointment contested as illegal by the Kosovo Government and various international players. He was forced to leave his post in July 2005 after the intervention of the Kosovo Government, which overturned the previous process of selection for University leadership, saying it had not been legally conducted. He was reelected to the PDK presidency in October 2005 but lost much of his influence. He has co-chaired the sub-working group on legal and constitutional issues within the Kosovo Unity Team, and is now a member of the pre-constitution working group that has been drafting a constitution for Kosovo post-independence under the guidance of ICO and the USG. USOP is familiar with Bajrami, who has proven troublesome and obstructionist in the pre-constitution working group setting and earlier in his capacity as University rector. He is a widower with two children. He does not speak English.

#### BOBAN STANKOVIC (SLS), RETURNS AND COMMUNITIES

Boban Stankovic, vice president of the Independent Liberal Party (SLS), was born on November 22, 1963, in the village of Crkvena Vodica near Pristina. He has a degree in geodesy. He worked in the geodetic services of the Kosovo Energy Corporation (KEK) from 1981 to 1985, and of the Fushe Kosove/Kosovo Polje municipality from 1991 to 1995, and then as financial inspector in the parallel structures of the Republic of Serbia from 1995 to 2005. During 1985-1989 he was a professional soccer player in the soccer club Pristina. As of July 2007, he serves as team leader in the Post and Telecommunications of Kosovo (PTK). Previously unengaged in politics, he began his political career in 2007 when he helped found the Independent Liberal Party (SLS), a party that aspires to be an authentic political voice of Kosovo Serbs, and was elected vice president. Stankovic is not well known to USOP. He is married with two children. He speaks Serbian, Albanian and basic English.

#### SADRI FERATI (LDK), TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Sadri Ferati, former chief executive officer of the Mitrovica municipality, was born on June 10, 1957. He has a bachelor's degree in mining and metallurgy from the University of Pristina. His professional career has been divided between the public and private sector: he worked as chief of the development section in a socially-owned factory in Vushtrri from 1985 to 1993, and as manager of a privately-owned company from 1993 to 2004. He has been a member of the LDK since 1990 and has served as secretary and deputy president of the LDK branch in the Mitrovica. During the 1990s, he

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also served as a member of the Kosovo Assembly set up by the Kosovo Albanian parallel government. Ferati did not hold any significant public office until 2004, when he was appointed director of the culture center in Mitrovica. A year later, in October 2005, he assumed the position of municipal CEO. His growing political fortunes within the LDK led to his candidacy for mayor of Mitrovica in the 2007 mayoral elections, which he lost to PDK Vice President Bajram Rexhepi. USOP has met with Ferati on occasion, but does not have a close relationship with him. He does not speak English.

#### FATMIR LIMAJ (PDK), TRANSPORTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS

Fatmir Limaj, PDK vice president for political affairs, was born on February 4, 1971, in the village of Banja near Malisheva/Malisevo. He holds a bachelor's degree in law from the University of Pristina. He started his activity in the student movement at the University of Pristina in the early 1990s. He was recruited into the KLA in 1996 by his

university roommate and KLA founder, Rexhep Selimi. He became known to the public in 1998 as the tough local commander from the Malisheva area with the nom de guerre, "Steel." He served as deputy minister of defense in the PGOK from April 1999 to January 2000. After the conflict, he represented the party on the Kosovo Transitional Council (KTC) and gradually became one of the most influential party players and a close collaborator of Thaci. He was among the founders of the PDK in October 1999 when he became a presidency member and public relations secretary. Limaj was elected to the Kosovo Assembly in the 2001 general elections and replaced Jakup Krasniqi as head of the party's assembly caucus in March 2002 after the latter's ministerial appointment. Limaj was indicted and arrested by the Hague Tribunal in February 2003 because of his alleged involvement in crimes against civilians committed at a KLA prison camp under his command. The ICTY acquitted him of all charges in December 2005; a subsequent appeal of this acquittal was rejected in October 2007. Despite some dissatisfaction with the way his party treated him while he was in The Hague, he returned to active politics in February 2006 and assumed the post of vice president for political affairs. Limaj also served as deputy head of the Consultative Council for Communities of the Unity Team during the final status process. He has unsuccessfully competed three times for the post of mayor of Pristina, the last time in November 2007, when he lost to LDK's Isa Mustafa. Due to the ICTY indictment, Limaj remains on the E.O. list and needs a waiver for travel to the U.S. Limaj is nevertheless well known to USOP. He is married with three children. He speaks passable English.

KAIDANOW