

## **General Staff and the Chiefs of Albanian General Staff Albania, over a century.**

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### **The history of General Staff is as long as a century**

General Staff or Supreme Military Staff was established four months after the foundation of the Ministry of War, i.e. on May 4, 1913, in Vlora, with the approval of Vlora Interim Government headed by Ismail Qemal Vlora. Its first name was "Shtati Madhnuer" changed later in "Supreme Staff". The 30-year-old Major Ali Shefqet Shkupi was the first head of Supreme Staff. He had been commander of the Istanbul garrison and answered Ismail Qemal Vlora's call to become the first Head of the Supreme Staff. Ali Shefqeti was selected for his high spirit of patriotism, the skillful military capabilities and his well-known personality. He was one of the brightest students at the urban school of Thessaloniki, he was distinguished in *Kara Harp Okulu* (*Turkish Military Academy*) and, along with Ataturk, his military talent was expressed in war tactics and strategies in the academy. In the general revolt of 1912, the progressive albanian elements in Istanbul were targeted for persecution. Forced by those circumstances, he left Istanbul and arrived in Constanta, Bucharest. In March 1913 he took part in the Congress of Trieste. His arrival in Vlora and his contribute to creating a modern Supreme Staff, at that time, was providential. The establishment of the Ministry of War and the Supreme Staff was being done based on European practices. Headquarters were settled in Vlora, at Ministry of War in Skelë-Vlorë.

In the beginning, this Staff was composed of few people, and was named "Shtati Madhnuer". It was part and depended from the Ministry of War. General Staff (Supreme Staff) marked a new, modern, advanced and contemporary level of organization, for that time. It was a testimony of the high cultural, political and military level of the state leaders and those military men of Provisional Government of Vlora. In order to have a functional organization of the Supreme Staff there had been created some structures like: District Supreme Staffs, the Secretary of Supreme Staff, Commission for Regulations and Exercises, Commission for Police and Gendarmerie Training and the Commission of Construction.

Supreme Staff was conceived, designed, and actually acted as a basic unit of the Ministry of War. Its main responsibility was to organize, train and professionally lead the Armed Forces in their combat activity. The draw of military regulations became a priority for the First Supreme Staff. On May 31, 1913, the Ministry of War was informed by Ali Shefqeti, the Chief of Staff, about the establishment of a *model company* and the activity related to the establishment of the *conscription*. On June 3, 1913, was drafted the first regulation of military militia, (written in Ottoman language), and it was forwarded to the Minister of Interior, Myfit Libohova. The Staff organized the defense fighting activities in the South and Southeast Albania against the Greek invasion, but also in the Northeast of the country. Supreme Staff cared about the supply with armaments and ammunitions in areas of the combat operations. During that time, the Staff was engaged in the organization of military structures and forces, the development of regulations and instructions dealing with organization, maintenance, training and operations of army and gendarmerie; cared about equipping forces and units with gear and heavy weapons, composition of an explanatory dictionary of military terms, in Albanian.

Later, in the '20, there was a reestablishment of new military structures. During the time of the First Albanian Republic, 1925-1928, began the consolidation of Armed Forces, going ahead also during the period of the Kingdom, (9.01.1928-7.04.1939). General Staff of ANLA (Albanian National-Liberation Army) was reestablished on July 10, 1943 (invasion period of the country). This General Staff led 24 brigades, 8 divisions and three army corps. After liberation, it was further consolidated and it led successfully the fight against the Greek provocations, in August, 1949.

After the liberation of the country, in December 1944, like the entire ANLA, the General Staff underwent the necessary transformations that brought it in a regular army in peacetime. In August 1946, Major General Mehmet Shehu was appointed the head of the General Staff (he replaced Major General Spiro Moisiu).

From the 1<sup>st</sup> of October 1946, seven departments were directly subordinated to the General Staff: Logistics, Artillery, Communication, Engineering, Coastal Protection, Operation-Organization and Mobilization Department. At the same time were created also 10 sections: Intelligence, Secretariat of the Chief of Staff, Interior Service of Staff, Logistics of Staff, Chemistry, Tanks and Armored Vehicles, Aviation, Combat Training, Cipher and Topography Section.

The reorganization of 1966 reduced the departments of General Staff in 4 departments: Operations, Intelligence, Organization-Mobilization and Communications Department, and there were also established seven autonomous sections like: Firefighting, Cipher, Topography, Administration, Economic, Combat Training and Service, a section which remained the same until the '80.

The Albanian military structure of the '80, was able to call to arms within 72 hours about 750 thousand of soldiers and volunteers.

Army Corps Commands, Political Department, Engineering Department, Logistics Support (LS) Command, Artillery Command, Logistics and Forces of the Ministry of Interior did not subordinate to the General Staff. General Staff led the Albanian military aviation regiments with 3 fighter-bomber aircraft regiments located in the military aerodromes of: Gjadër, Rinas and Kuçovë. During 20 years several units were set up: the Regiment of Tirana, the first Jet Aviation Regiment which was established in 1955 in Kuçovë; Military Transportation in Tirana, Rinas Regiment, Aviation School, the Helicopter Regiment, Gjadri Regiment. Military Aviation was constituted of 240 military aviation aircrafts. The General Staff efficiently commanded the Albanian army until '90. The Albanian Army had 1300 tanks and armored vehicles, to mention that the first tank company was established in April 1, 1946, with the Italian tank brand "Spali", trophy from WW2. In April 1948, General Staff (GS) established the first tank regiment "Vojo Kushi", which included russian types of tanks *T-34* and *AVL-76mm*. The First Brigade was created on April 24, 1963, which contained chinese tank types *T-59*. In the '70, the Albanian Army had 10 tank brigades with 100 tanks of brands *T-59 (54)*, *T-62*, and several autonomous battalions with *T-34*, *CLE 76mm* and *100mm* tanks. The Albanian Army owned 3-4 armored personnel carriers' battalions, which were the decisive weapons of fire and troop motion. The work and duties of the GS were facilitated by the establishment of corps. Solving problems and facing difficulties of units and subunits became a more flexible management. Thus, the GS dealt with the overall management and direction of military operations and the control in different levels of AF structures.

The reorganization of 1974 of the AF didn't bring essential changes in structure and task performance of General Staff. A new reorganization of the Army was that of 1982-1983, where the corps system shifted with subsequent divisions until 1992. The General Staff headed the Army composed of a big number of military men, active and reserve, with about 16500 officers, 9000 NCOs, 8000 soldiers and 60000 civilians with about 450000 reserve troops and 230000 volunteer troops, with 22 divisions and three Forces which were: Counter-Air Defense, Navy and Aviation. The GS commanded 127 Infantry Brigades, Artillery Brigades and Assault Brigades, 1050 tanks, 4000 land artillery weapons, 34 anti-aircraft artillery regiments anti-aircraft artillery brigades, etc. At the border, heavy machine guns, batteries of anti-aircraft artillery ready for fire were able to open fire within 2-3 minutes. For 20-30 minutes, the battalions of machine gunners at the border were ready for battle; ground artillery was able to open fire within 15-20 minutes. The restructuring process of the Armed Forces in democracy lasted two decades transforming them into a smaller and more professional force. This process had been a history of success for AF as a dignified NATO member since 2 April 2009.

### **The Twenty-three Chiefs of General Staff along a century**

*On May 4, 1913, the head of the Supreme Staff was Major Ali Shefqet Shkupi; in November 1920, it was Brigadier General Ali Riza Kolonja; in December 1921, Major Xhavid Leskoviku; in June 1923, Major Bajram Fevziu; in January 1925, the austrian General Gustav von Myrdacz; while on April 7, 1939, the Albanian Armed Forces, ceased to exist because of the Italian fascist occupation. In the period July 10, 1943-August 1946, at the head of the General Staff of ANLA was general Spiro Moisiu; in August 1946, General Mehmet Shehu; in January 28, 1948, the chief of the General Staff of the Albanian National Army was General Beqir Balluku; in 1952 , General Petrit Dume, in 1954, General Arif Hasko (Mema); in 1956-1974, General Petrit Dume; in 1974, Sami Meçollari; in 1975, Veli Llakaj; in 1981, Kiço Mustaqi; from February to June, 1991, Colonel Halim Abazi; June 1991-August 1992, General Kostaq Karoli; in 1992-1994, General. Ilia Vasho; in the years 1994-1997, General Sheme Kosovo; July-August 1997, General Adam Çopani; in 1997-2000, Brigadier General Aleks Andoni; in the years 2000-2006, General Pëllumb Qazimi: October 2006-June 2008, Lieutenant General Luan Hoxha; June 2008 - July 2011, Major General Maksim Malaj while from 08.08.2011 onwards, Major General Xhemal Gjunksi.*

### **Chiefs of the General Staff (1913-2013)**

Lieutenant Colonel Ali Shefqet Shkupi a well-known personality in the Ottoman army, former Garrison Commander of Istanbul, ranked "Bimbash" (Major). Lieutenant Colonel Ali Shefqet Shkupi, was the first Chief of Supreme Staff of the Albanian Army bearing the functions of the Supreme Commander in the Albanian Government of Ismail Qemal Vlora. He deserted the Ottoman Army while he was Garrison Commander of Istanbul. For the first time in history, the Supreme Staff led by Ali Shefqet Shkupi became the main organizer of the constituent structures of the Albanian Army with active forces, reserve troops, volunteer and paramilitary forces. Ali Shefqet Shkupi was the architect of the establishment of the first Albanian military company which became a model for the entire Albanian Army, that would have been established after independence. He faced successfully two fundamental challenges in the first Albanian government: the organization and establishment of the Armed Forces and simultaneously maintaining law and order. In documents of that time we can read: "As soon as he arrived in Vlora, Ali Shefqeti was welcomed with high honors from the most famous Albanian patriots

being in the city, as well as by the Prime Minister Ismail Qemali. Just a few days after his arrival in Vlora, Prime Minister Ismail Qemali decreed Ali Shefqeti as Chief of the Supreme Staff of the first Albanian Army which was newly established. Referring to one of the witnesses of the time: "after accepting this responsibility, Ali Shefqeti committed himself to the organization of military structures, creating the necessary forces, and the police". For the first time an Albanian military regulation with 7 articles in a single page had been written, which was followed by many orders and instructions that dealt with the functioning of the Supreme Staff. Ali Shefqeti was the mastermind of the regulation for the establishment of the Albanian militia, a regulation adopted by the government of Ismail Qemali, on June 3, 1913. With the energy of a 30 years old man, Ali Shefqeti contributed to adhere to the Albanian reality the whole plans for the establishment of the Armed Forces. In January 1920, with the establishment of the government, after Lushnja Congress, the Supreme Staff was reestablished and at the head was Lieutenant Colonel Ali Shefqet Shkupi.

**General Ali Riza Kolonja**, was Minister of War in the Albanian National Army in the '20, after Lushnja Congress with Prime Minister Sulejman Delvina. He also performed the duty of the Chief of the Supreme Staff and simultaneously the duty of the Commander of the only division that Albania had at the time. He was born in Kolonja in 1880, and attended schools in Bitola, Istanbul, and graduated from the Staff Academy in Germany. There were dozens of tasks he had carried out in the Ottoman Army and, in his country, Minister of War. He had a rich military culture, was skillful in military diplomacy and could speak five foreign languages. In 1922, he was a member of the International Commission of Four Powers as signatory parties for the Albanian Borders. He was the commander of the first division established in ANA (Albanian National Army). He also organized the field protection from serb forces in the north and greek forces in southern Albania. It was general Kolonja, who, as Minister of War, implemented the law on military recruitment for the first time. He passed away in 1930, but he will remain in the nation's memory for the reconstruction of the Albanian National Army and the protection of national borders.

**Major Xhavid Leskoviku** was born on May 2, 1882, in Leskovik. He attended the War Academy in Istanbul, Branch Infantry (*Pyade*). Commissioned as officer, on August 1, 1907, he served for six years in the Ottoman Army having various positions. On January 1, 1913, he joined the Albanian National Army. He served in the government of Ismail Qemal Bey Vlora and the Army of Vilhelm Vid. Distinguished for his rich knowledge he was allocated to dutch military men. Xhavid Leskoviku was appointed to judge the plot of xhon turks (young turks), (the military men of the time), in the Military Court of Vlora. In November 1919, Xhavid Leskoviku was a member of political organization called "*Krahu Kombëtar*" (National Wing) and took part in protection of Lushnja's Congress in January 1920. With the creation of the army, by the end of this year, he was appointed the Chief of the General Staff, at a time when the Minister of War was General Ali Riza Kolonja. In 1924, he was appointed Military Attaché in Belgrade, later Ambassador in Skopje and finally in Ankara. In 1945, after the Second World War, he was charged and convicted as a collaborator of the quislings. He distinguished himself as a professional military man in the establishment of ANA and as one of the leaders of the Albanian General Staff.

**Major Bajram Fevziu**, was known not only as one of the leaders of the Supreme Staff, in the position of the Chief of this Staff, but at the same time as one of the albanian political

personalities. Bajram Fevziu was born in 1884 in Kolonja. After finishing the high school he went to Istanbul and graduated from the Military Academy in 1906. Later, in 1908, he graduated from the General Staff Academy in Vienna. When Albania was proclaimed independent, he organized and commanded the military forces of Vlorë being part of ANA. From March 1914 until September 1914, as the Government of Prince Vidi took office he served in its military ranks as a lieutenant. He was distinguished for his loyalty, patriotism, determination and military skills. Promoted to major, he replaced Xhavit Leskoviku in the position of the Chief of the Supreme Staff of the Albanian Army. He held this position even in Fan Noli's Government. Major Fevziu remained in this position until December 24, 1924. Once the king Zogu came back to power, he dissolved the Ministry of War, creating "General Command of Army Forces". Zog also dispersed the army and its officers, regarding them as supporters of the Revolution of 24 June, and its consequences. Bajram Fevziu was included in the group that was released from military service without any reward (43 people who had fled from Albania in 1925). At this time he was only 41 years old and was suffering from an incurable disease. Earlier in 1914, he became a member of a secret committee of the National Movement in Shkodra, where he found other former military men of the the period '20-'40 like Estref Frashëri, Sotir Peçi, Ali Shefqeti, Hoxhë Kadriu and then Bajram Curri (at that time former military people were allowed to participate in political life as members of a party and could run for parliament). In the elections of 1921, he became a Member of Parliament representing Mat. In 1919, he was Mayor in Shkodra. Bajram Fevziu was forced to retire from his career in his middle age, though he continued to work in silence and in secrecy. He passed away in Vienna in 1928.

**General Gustav von Myrdacz** (of austrian origin), served as the Chief of the Supreme Staff and simultaneously was the organizer of the Albanian Army. He was born on December 7, 1876 in Vienna (capital of the Austro-Hungarian Empire). He graduated from the Military Academy of Austria and was commissioned officer on August 18, 1897. General Myrdacz came to Albania during the World War One, on May 20, 1922, when Ahmet Zogu (Minister of the Interior) invited him to Albania. On January 18, 1925, with the reorganization of the ANA, Myrdacz was appointed the Chief of the General Staff and the main organizer of the ANA. In 1933, based on his contribution in the organization of the Albanian Army, he was promoted to general and worked for ANA until the occupation of Albania in 1939. He showed up again at the time of the fascist occupation tending to establish an independent Albanian Army under the Command of National Defence, (was named "Albanian Defense Command" under german occupation). This was a completely fictitious "ANA" where Myrdacz was appointed Chief of the General Staff and Preng Prevezi was the General Commander. He was sentenced by a special court in 1945 as a "war criminal". General Myrdacz has contributed to the establishment of the Albanian National Army in the years 1922-1939. In 1923 he presented a draft-reform of the Albanian Army although it was never put into action.

**General Spiro Moisiu**, was born in 1900, in Kavaja. After finishing the "*unique school*" in Kavaja and Durrës, Spiro has been sent to Vienna, Austria, to attend high school. After returning from Austria, in 1918-1919 he attended a several-month-course at the school for officers' education in Tirana, which was then headed by german and austrian instructors and was promoted as second lieutenant. A year later, Moisiu took part in the government forces assigned to protect the Congress of Lushnjë. The same year, he was appointed the chief of group staff during the fightings against serb forces in Kaptina e Martaneshit. In 1923, he attended another one year officer course in Tirana (course led by german military men) and was promoted to

lieutenant. In the Revolution of 24 June, Spiro sided along with military forces commanded by Col. Rexhep Shala and Col. Kasem Qafzezi who became part of Fan Noli Forces. In december 1924, lieutenant Moisiu joined the government forces that ambushed in Shkalla e Tujanit the forces of Zog to prevent his return in Albania. In 1925, given his skills as a very capable military man, Prime Minister Ahmet Zog called again Lieutenant Spiro Moisiu to arms and commissioned him as an ANA officer. The military career of Spiro Moisiu kept upturning after the years 1929-1930, when he finished with excellent results the *School of officer progress* in Tirana, which was led by italian instructors. Among 43 participants of the course he was the brightest, thus they promoted him, captain. In late 1940, Major Moisiu as Commander of Battalion "Tomorri" was sent in the greek-italian war, but he refused to fight and withdrew from the front. He and Major Prenk Pervizi encouraged defections among albanian soldiers. After being discharged, in the years 1941-1942, Moisiu was located in the areas of Lushnjë dhe Berat and established contacts with other former commissioned officers of the monarchy, organizing the establishment of the first partisan detachments. Given his unblemished past and his rare skills as a commissioned officer, in July 1943, the leaders of the Communist Party invited him to Labinot, Elbasan and he was appointed to the position of the Commander-in-Chief of the National Liberation Army. He was famous as Commander-in-Chief, but in Congress of Përmet all the politic functions, i.e. the commander and general commissar of NLA were concentrated in the hands of the political leaders, while Spiro Moisiu held only the position of the Commander of the General Staff.

**Colonel General Mehmet Shehu**, was born on January 10, 1913, in the village of Çorrush part of the region of Mallakastra known for its patriotic traditions. In 1932, he finished the *Technical School* in Tirana He went to Naples to study at the military college, but was expelled for his revolutionary ideas. He left Italy and returned to Albania where he was imprisoned for 2-3 months in Tirana. After being released from the prison, he worked in the farm of the *Technical School* as a tractor driver. He attended the School of Officers and was commissioned officer in 1937. In december of that year, he went to Spain where he became part of "Garibaldi" International Brigade 12, which was made up of volunteers from many countries. He commanded the IV battalion. In 1939, after the demobilization of foreign volunteers he returned to France and stayed in a concentration camp. In august 1942, he returned in Albania, and was appointed to the organization secretary of the Communist Party of Vlora Region. During the National Liberation War he was the commander of Çeta Plakë of Mallakastra; in February 1943 he became the commander of the first Br1S (First Offensive Brigade); in August 1943, commander of the D1S (First Offensive Division); in May 1944 he promoted to Colonel, while in october 1944 he promoted to Major General. After the liberation of Albania, he was sent to study in the Soviet Union. In the period 1945-1946, he studied in the prestigious russian Military Academy "Voroshilov" and after finishing his studies he returned to Albania. In 1947, he was appointed Chief of the General Staff. In the period 1948-1954, he performed simultaneously the task of Deputy Prime Minister and that of Minister of Interior. From 1954 to 1981 he was Prime Minister, while from 1974 to 1981, he was Minister of Defense. He spoke five foreign languages: English, French, Italian, Spanish and Russian.

**Lieutenant General Beqir Balluku**, was born on February 14, 1917, in Tirana. He studied at the *Technical School* of Tirana. He embarked in the communist movement while accomplishing the conscription (1940-1942). On 20 May, 1943 he was appointed commander of "Kruja-Ishëm" partisan battalion; on September 18, 1943, the Commissar of the Br3S and later Commander of

the Br2S. On January 28, 1948, he was appointed Chief of the General Staff of the Albanian National Army. He graduated from Military Academy "Voroshilov". At the first congress of the party he was elected member of the Political Bureau and in 1953, Minister of People's Defence. A year later, he was promoted Lieutenant General, which was the highest rank a commissioned officer had ever received. Beqir Balluku was also a member of the National Assembly. In July 1974, he was accused by dictatorship of organizing the military *coup d'état*. He was sentenced to death and executed on November 5, 1975.

**Lieutenant General Arif Hasko (Mema)**, was born in the village of Tërbaç, Vlora Region. During WWII, he was known by the nickname "Patriot". After finishing the elementary school in his birthplace, he attended the commercial school in Vlora. In the Antifascist National Liberation War (ANLW) he led significant partisan units from Vlora to the north of Albania. In December 1943, he joined the Br1S, performing various tasks, even Political Commissar of the Brigade. After liberation he graduated from the High Academy of the General Staff in the Soviet Union. Later, he performed high duties as Division and Corps Commissar, Chief of the General Staff and Deputy Minister of People's Defence. He was and remained faithful to the ideals of the ANLW. He was the first deputy chairman of the National Committee of the Veterans of ANLW. For his contributions he has been awarded many orders and medals accredited by former presidium of the National Assembly.

**Lieutenant General Petrit Dume**, was born on 20 May, 1920. He was an active participant of the anti-fascist war and a senior brigade commander and division commander. He was first promulgated National Hero and later in 1974, he was declared People's Enemy and was charged with *coup d'état* activity. He was educated at two Russian military academies. He was Chief of General Staff of the Armed Forces of Albania, the one considered as the longest serving chief of the General Staff. He held the position for two times. He deserved merits as the leader for the fight against the Greek Army in 1949 provocations. He had been a member of National Assembly in all legislatures until 1974. In July 1974, he was accused by the dictatorship of organizing the *coup d'état* activity and was sentenced to death and executed on November 5, 1975, for high treason. His remains were found in the summer of 2001, near Vranisht village in Vlora.

**Sami Meçollari**, was Chief of the General Staff of the Army, for a short period, only six months in 1974. He was one of the prominent leaders for large military formations. He was born in village of Marian in Opar county, Korçë, on March 10, 1937. He finished "Skanderbeg" Military High School and the Higher Officers' School with excellent results, and was promoted to lieutenant (chemistry specialist). During 1961-1965 attended the Military Academy and during 1967-1968 the High Officers' Course at Military Academy. He also graduated from the Engineering Faculty at the University of Tirana and the Higher School of Philosophy etc. He had always been an excellent student. Initially he served as the chief of chemical service in Berat battalion, to continue as chief of chemistry in the brigade of Peshkopia (1960-1963), chief of chemical service in Shkodra Corps (1965-1967). Later, he conducted tasks as Chief of Operations in Shkodra Corps (1968-1970). In the period 1970-1972, he was appointed Chief of Staff of the Gjirokastra Corps. In 1973, he became the commander of that corps until 1974, when he was appointed Chief of the General Staff of the Albanian Army. In December 1974, he was released from this position and was appointed brigade commander, commander of the military school of reserve officers in Zall-Herr Tirana. He finished his military career as the commander

of Open Military School in Rrëshen. In 1986 he retired. In 1991, he founded the organization of "Released and Retired Military Men" (ORRMM), and was elected as its head. He was a demanding person during his entire military career and he led the others by personal example.

**Veli Llakaj**, was born on February 18, 1935, in Kras, Tepelenë. In 1951, he finished the secondary school in his birthplace. During 1951-1954, worked as geologist and dealer in Memaliaj. In 1954, he attended the Officers' Higher School (OHS) and graduated in 1957, with excellent scores and was promoted to lieutenant. Graduated from OHS in 1957, he was appointed platoon commander in OHS, a task which he performed until 1960. Meanwhile he finished "Qemal Stafa" high school in Tirana. In the years 1960-1963 he worked as an instructor in the Ministry of People's Defense in the Directorate of Combat Preparedness. In 1963-1966, graduated from Military Academy; in 1966-1967 he was the Chief of Staff of the Br5S in Vlora; in 1967-1968 worked as duty officer at the General Staff; in 1968-1971 he was the commander of the First Infantry Brigade (Br1K) in Tirana; in 1971-1972 he worked at the Academy of the General Staff and was the commander of Burrel Corps; in 1972-1974, he was the commander of the First Corps of Coastal Defense in Fier. In 1974, he was appointed first Deputy Minister of Defense and Chief of the General Staff of the Army, a task he performed until 1982. On 13 October 1982, the Central Committee accused him as one of the collaborators of Mehmet Shehu and as organizer of the coup d'état. They interned him in Cërrik. In the years 1978-1982, he was a member of the People's Assembly representing Upper Kurvelesh. In the years 1975-1982, was one of the five members of the Supreme Council of Defense of the Republic.

**Kiço Mustaqi**, was a commissioned officer, who was born on March 22, 1938, in a village near Delvina (Saranda). He has acquired all kinds of Albanian military education, with excellent scores. He attended "Skanderbeg" Military High School, graduated from Officers' Higher School and Defence Academy and later the High Course of the General Staff. In every step of his education he had been an outstanding student. He was Chief of General Staff of the Albanian Army for nine consecutive years from 1982 to 1991. In February 1991, he became the Albanian Defense Minister in the government of Prime Minister Fatos Nano and left the office with the government's resignation in June of that year. He was a member of the Parliament. He had been awarded many orders and medals for his proficiency and accuracy in conducting the duties. After leaving office, he worked in immigration for a period of nearly two decades.

**Colonel Halim Abazi**, was born in December 1944 in Tërbaç, Vlora. He has acquired all kinds of Albanian military education with excellent results. So, in the years 1953-1960, he studied at "Skanderbeg" military school; in the years 1960-1964, graduated from the United Officers' Higher School and in the years 1970-1972 from the Defence Academy. He has performed tasks of the highest level in the Albanian army, including those in military school levels. In the period February-June 1991, he was appointed as the Chief of General Staff of the Albanian Army. Since 1993 he is a reserve officer.

**General Kostaq Karoli**, was born on December 14, 1945, in Korca. He has acquired all kinds of Albanian military education with very good results. He studied in "Skanderbeg" military high school in the period 1959-1963, whereas in 1963-1965, graduated from the Officers' Higher School in the Combined-arms Faculty; in the years 1975-1977, studied at the Academy of Defense and later attended the High Course of the General Staff. Later he also had some further qualifications for civil-military relations, the course on pedagogy and psychology. He has participated in different exercises at home and abroad. He performed various tasks starting with

platoon commander, firing lecturer, department chief, brigade commander, commander of the academy and from June 1991 to August 1992, he was the Chief of General Staff. He is awarded 11 different orders and medals for his good job. He worked in military science sectors, after obtaining "Master of Science", "Doctor", "Docent" and the academic title "Professor".

**General Ilia Vasho**, was born on 10 July 1944 in Leskovik. He acquired all kinds of Albanian military education and the highest military qualifications. In the years 1962-1964, he studied at the Officers' Higher School and in the years 1976-1978, at the Defence Academy. He has performed task of the highest level in the Albanian army, including those in military school levels. He obtained the PhD academic degree. In 1992-1994, he was the Chief of General Staff of the Albanian Army. In 1997 he became a reserve officer after being released from his function as the military representative in NATO, a function he had from 1994 to 1997.

**Four-star General, Sheme Kosovo** had been the Chief of the General Staff in the period 1994-1997. Sheme Kosovo was born on 24 March, 1949. He finished the Teachers' Training School in 1967 and graduated from the Officers' Higher School in 1971, while in the years 1979 to 1981, graduated from the Military Academy. He performed tasks of the highest level in the Albanian even Chief of General Staff. On 2 March, 1997, he was released from this important task, while the Army was suffering the most tragic, dramatic and complex events of the twentieth century.

**Major General Adem Çopani** was born in July 1944, in Tirana. He acquired all kinds of Albanian military education such as "Skanderbeg" Military High School, Officers' Higher School and Defense Academy with excellent scores. He performed tasks of the highest level in the Albanian Army, including those in military school levels. From 1991 to March 1997, he served as the military adviser to the President of Republic. In March 1997, in one of the most difficult and darkest periods of the Albanian Army, he was appointed to the high position of the Chief of General Staff (which he held until August 1997). It was given the PhD scientific degree and the academic title "Professor" during his military career. From 1997 he is a reserve officer and currently lives in the USA.

**Brigadier General Aleks Andoni**, was born on 8 June, 1956, in the village of Vuno, in Vlora. He acquired military education in "Skanderbeg" military high school, in the Officers' Higher School, in the Defense Academy and the postgraduate qualification for pedagogy and psychology. He performed tasks of the highest level in the Albanian Army, including those of military school levels. In the period 1992 to August 1997 he was a reserve officer due to military reform. In September 1997, the politics circumstances required him to be the Chief of General Staff of the Albanian Army, a position held by him until 2000, when he completed the three-year-term provided by law for this position.

**General Pëllumb Qazimi** General Pëllumb Qazimi, was born on October 21, 1957 in Korça. In 1981 he graduated from Officers' Higher School and in 1991 from the Military Academy. He attended several courses like: "Refugees" (Hungary, '92); "International laws for refugees" (Italy, '92); "Orientation and planning of operations" (Turkey, '94), "Strategic Intelligence" (U.S., '95 ), NATO course "Operations Staff Officer" (Holland, '96); "Law of war" (Italy, '98). He also conducted postgraduate studies "Global Security, Defence Diplomacy" (Royal Military College, University of Cranfield, UK, 2000) and in 2001 at the same university obtained master degree; working on: "Local Traditions and Foreign Influences in the English Military History 1912-1991" (Faculty of Philosophy, University of Zagreb, 2012) he obtained the doctor degree. During

the period he worked as the Chief of General Staff, he has participated in seminars, conferences, both in Albania and in NATO member and non-member countries. He has published in journals of national and international security issues, has been a lecturer at universities at home and abroad. He has performed duties as a platoon commander, drill instructor, deputy director at the Directorate of Intelligence in General Staff, Deputy Director of Military Intelligence Service (MIS), Chief of Military Intelligence, and Chief of the General Staff. On 1 August 2007, he was appointed ambassador to Croatia and later non-resident ambassador to Bosnia and Herzegovina. He has been Chief of General Staff for two terms between 2000 and 2006. During this period AAF made steady steps towards NATO.

**General Luan Hoxha.** General Luan Hoxha, was born on March 28, 1960 in Shkodra and was chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces from 2006 to 2008. After his graduation in 1983 until 2008 he carried out high duties even Chief of General Staff. He has a rich educational background. The explosion that occurred on 15 March 2008 interrupted his military career at a time when he was holding the highest military duty.

**General Maksim Malaj.** General Maksim Malaj, was born on December 13, 1958. He graduated the Officers' Higher School and has acquired many other qualifications. In 1981-1982 he was a firearm instructor at the Instructor Preparation School in Zall-Herr, after that, for five years training instructor; instructor in the Training Branch of the 8<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division; Infantry and Territorial Battalion Commander. In 1992-1993, he was instructor in the Training Department of the 8<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division; in 1993-1994 he was chief of operations in Military Unit nr.1105; in 1994-1997, instructor in the Training Branch Infantry Division 8; in 1997 -2005, inspector in the Inspection Department of the Ministry of Defense; in 2005-2007, Chief of Staff of the Rapid Reaction Brigade and its commander in 2008. He held the position of the Chief of Staff from 2008 to 8 August 2011. During the time Maksim Malaj was Chief of the General Staff, Albania became a member in the most durable structure of security for nations, in NATO.