



## U.S. OFFICE PRISTINA

Dragodan, N. Hikmet 30  
Pristina, Kosovo

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### *Monthly Newsletter*

#### **KOSOVO INDEPENDENCE DECLARATION DRAWS 1300 INTERNATIONAL JOURNALISTS**



Kosovo Prime Minister, Hashim Thaçi at the PMC podium with the staff, presenting them with Certificates of Appreciation for their assistance to media during Kosovo's historic transition. Photo: Laura Hochla, USOP.

With journalists from around the world poised to descend on Pristina for Kosovo's much-anticipated declaration of independence, USOP assisted the Government of Kosovo in quickly establishing a 24-hour central media center in Pristina's Grand Hotel. In the 10 days leading up to the February 17<sup>th</sup> declaration, USOP collaborated with European Union representatives to outfit and staff the Center as well as develop a media strategy for optimizing its use. With more than 700 international journalists registering during the first 24 hours of the Center's opening, a large-screen television DVC link to pool cameras at various Pristina locations as well as Brussels and other world capitals, sound and translation equipment, and appropriate backdrops were in place along with wireless internet access and other media support equipment and facilities.

With an unparalleled panoramic outdoor terrace optic and graphic indoor backdrops containing appropriate messaging, the venue especially appealed to heavy-hitting international broadcasters. Free wireless internet, endless coffee, and a nonstop bar/lounge facility, also resulted in heavy use. Local university journalism students were recruited to staff the Center on a 24-hour basis. Thanks to USOP efforts, the facility was provided free of charge by the hotel's owner. More than 1300 journalists representing about 50 countries and scores of news organizations -- including the [New York Times](#), [Washington Post](#), [Chicago Tribune](#), [Los Angeles Times](#), [NPR](#) and [Bloomberg](#) -- took advantage of the facilities as an operations base.

During the nine days that the Center operated, it was frequently used by Kosovo's Prime Minister, Kosovo Police Service, and other GoK officials for briefings to local and international press. In addition, it served as a focal point for rapidly disseminating statements and releases, conducting one-on-one interviews, pitching story ideas, providing backgrounders, and most importantly -- quickly trumping inaccurate or misleading information with official sources. For example, within minutes of official USG recognition, Pristina Media Center journalists had copies of Secretary Rice's official recognition statement both electronically and in hard copy. To fill gaps between official news conferences, NGO backgrounders were scheduled to highlight projects aimed at healing interethnic conflict, economic development, and other issues. Seamless organization was reflected in the thorough coverage and high marks given to the Center by journalists as well as the GoK. CNN's Alessio Vinci asked for only one thing: a "Non-Smoking Section" -- which is impossible to find in Kosovo.